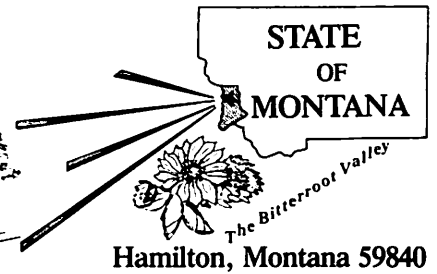
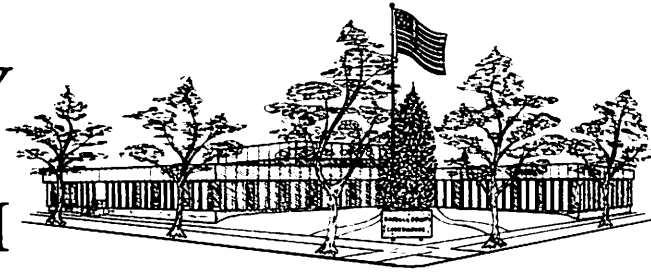


# COUNTY OF RAVALLI



August 3, 2017

Elsie Arntzen, Superintendent  
Montana Office of Public Instruction  
P.O. Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501

Dear Ms. Arntzen,

We have been informed that OPI revised the Request For Proposal (RFP) rules this year regarding the three-year State/Federal grant to support High School Equivalency Programs for HiSET. Unfortunately the rules were changed in a manner that precluded Literacy Bitterroot, Ravalli County's only public HiSET Program from applying for any funds. Thus Literacy Bitterroot lost half of its annual funding.

Loss of these funds is catastrophic to Ravalli County's HiSET preparation program.

We do not want to lose local control over this essential Program. We don't want to raise local taxes if the state already provides funding for such programs. Since you campaigned on the issue of **Local Control**, please spell out, step-by-step, what conditions must be satisfied for our Local Program to regain the State/Federal grant administered by OPI. Please state whether there is any chance the Ravalli Program can get this funding next year. If there is a chance, please provide the conditions that must be met by any and all parties. Please state the circumstances under which Missoula Public Schools will continue to enjoy the funding previously awarded to, and efficiently and effectively utilized by, Literacy Bitterroot. If there is no chance for Ravalli to regain the funds this year, explain why and when the next opportunity will come. We are unclear about why funding for our County's HiSET Program was awarded to Missoula. Please explain in detail, why the sudden change? Why does a city control our rural area's Program?

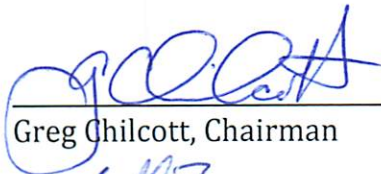
Literacy Bitterroot typically serves around 200 students in the Bitterroot Valley. In the past 5 years it has graduated an average of 47 students. This is more than Darby and Victor High Schools combined. The Program also trains many other students in remedial math and budgeting. The Program graciously shares its Computer Lab with The Bitterroot College on College premises.

While one quarter of Ravalli County student do not need to take all required HiSET courses in order to graduate, they are certainly taking advantage of the HiSET

program in order to complete their High School education. Obtaining their High School Degree with the aid of the Program has the same impact on their earnings capacity as it does for students who need the entire Program. It is often the difference between living above the poverty line or living below it. Graduation generates future tax payers. Graduation eliminates government dependents. Thus **Literacy Bitterroot's Program is essential to Ravalli County.**

We strongly protest this loss of local control and ask the grant to be revised to allow Ravalli's Program to apply for funds to serve Ravalli County exclusively.

Respectively,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Greg Chilcott, Chairman

  
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Jeff Burrows, Vice Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ray Hawk, Commissioner

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Doug Schallenberger, Commissioner

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Hoffman, Commissioner

CC:

Senator Fred Thomas

Senator Pat Connell

Representative Theresa Manzella

Representative Ron Ehli

Representative Nancy Ballance

Representative Ed Greef