

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

August 23, 2024

Representative Bob Keenan
Chairman
Behavioral Health System for Future Generations Commission

Dear Chairman Keenan:

Thank you for the Commission's recommendation to provide one-time funding to support start-up costs for Physician Assistant (PA) and Occupational Therapy (OT) Doctorate Programs at the University of Montana College of Health. I share your interest in addressing important workforce shortage gaps and welcome the Commission's insight on this issue.

According to the Department of Labor & Industry (DLI), Montana has a workforce shortage of both OTs and PAs, critical roles in our behavioral health and developmental disability continuum of care. In a 2022 report, DLI estimated that Montana needed to add approximately 67 PAs and 33 OTs to our workforce annually to meet demand. I agree that investing in our state's workforce is vital to ensure we can meet the needs of patients today and in the future.

While I welcome the Commission's recommendation, I want to ensure additional higher education institutions in Montana are eligible to apply for one-time only funding under this initiative. Pursuant to statute, I modify the Commission's recommendation to clarify that any Montana institution of higher education authorized to issue degrees by the Board of Regents per 20-25-107, MCA is eligible to apply for one-time grant funding to support start-up costs associated with launching a PA or OT doctorate program. Accordingly, DPHHS shall establish an application process to evaluate grant proposals of this nature.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of the work before you. I am grateful for our continued collaboration as we work to make lasting investments in our state's behavioral health and developmental disabilities systems to better serve Montanans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Greg Gianforte".

Greg Gianforte
Governor

Chairman Keenan
August 23, 2024
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Cc: Charles Brereton, Director, Department of Public Health and Human Services
Ryan Osmundson, Budget Director, Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning
Sen. Dennis Lenz, Chairman, Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim
Committee