

STATE OF MONTANA

HEALTH ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES

Thursday, June 3rd, 2021

9:00am

1. OPEN MEETING

Representative Garner call the Health Advisory Commission meeting to order. Temporary Chair, Representative Frank Garner; Senators Bob Keenan, Carl Glimm, Mary McNally; Representatives Terry Moore, Mary Caferro, and Matt Regier; Director Adam Meier, General Counsel Anita Milanovich, and Charlie Brereton were present.

The commission established rules for proxy voting and agreed a voting member may carry the proxy of another voting member established in writing prior to the beginning of the meeting. The commission will be governed by Mason's rule, a majority vote is necessary and members will make a motions to consider recommendations.

2. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Senator Keenan moved to nominate Representative Garner to chair the commission. Passed unanimously by voice vote.

The chair moved to make Director Adam Meier Vice Chair. Passed unanimously by voice vote.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Director Mike Foster provided background information on ARPA and outlined the roles and responsibilities of the commissions based on HB 632.

4. HANDLING OF PUBLIC COMMENT

Director Foster provided guidance on handling of public comment and described the new web intake process for public comment.

5. PRESENTATION BY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Director Meier recapped the scope of HB 632 as it relates to funding assigned to DPHHS.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS BY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

SNAP Temporary Increase: Director Meier requested the commission approve the 15% increase in SNAP benefits to all households for the period of July through September 2021 at an estimated cost of \$8,092,089. Under the proposal, all households already determined eligible for SNAP for the months of July through September 2-21 will automatically receive this 15% increase in benefits for that time.

There were no comments from the public.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the 15 percent increase in SNAP benefits for all SNAP households for the period of July through September 2021. The estimated cost of this increase is \$8,092,089.

The chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously.

SNAP Administration: Director Meier requested the commission approve the spending of FFY 2021 allocated SNAP administrative funds, totaling \$449,862. The 2018 Farm Bill established a nationwide National Accuracy Clearinghouse to reduce waste, and Montana was selected to be one of the first four states in this program rollout. \$354,422 of these funds will permit Montana's participation in the NAC and allow Montana to identify enrollees concurrently enrolled in other states. The remaining \$95,440 of allocated funds will permit implementation of pandemic-related SNAP program changes.

Public comment was provided.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the FFY 2021 allocation of \$449,862 in SNAP administration funds. These funds will ultimately permit Montana's participation in the National Accuracy Clearinghouse to identify concurrent SNAP enrollment in other states, as well as cover the costs associated with required SNAP programmatic changes during the pandemic..

The chair called for a roll call vote. The motion passed 8 – 2.

Summer Pandemic EBT: Director Meier requested the commission approve Summer P-EBT benefits. P-EBT was created as part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to reimburse families of eligible children, aged 5 – 18, who lost access to free or reduced-price school meals due to school closures resulting from the pandemic. There is no specific allocation amount and federal funding will cover any child eligible. DPHHS estimated up to 75,000 children are eligible for summer benefits of \$6.81 per child, per day, for 55 days, averaging to \$375 total per child, resulting in total benefits of \$28,125,000.

There were no comments from the public.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the allocation of \$28,125,000 for P-EBT to provide a summer P-EBT benefit of \$375 to any child eligible for free or reduced-price school lunch and to any SNAP child ages 0-5.

The chair called for a roll call vote. The motion passed 7-3.

Family Violence Prevention and Services Grant: Director Meier requested the commission approve for the allocation of \$376,207 to the Family Violence Prevention and Service Grant to address the increase in family, domestic, and dating violence resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic through increased

resources to shelters and supportive services to victims. Currently, Family Violence Prevention and Services Act funding goes directly to the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, as well as other domestic violence shelters across the state. CFSD will modify current contracts to continue delivery of services. The chair asked that the department make clear these funds are one-time only benefits in contracts.

There was no comment from the public.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the allocation of \$376,207 to the Family Violence Prevention and Service grant to provide shelter and supportive services for victims of family violence, domestic violence, and dating violence.

The chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously. Representative Caferro voted yes by proxy of Senator McNally.

Community Based Child Abuse Prevention: Director Meier requested the commission approve the allocation of \$762,432.00 for the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention ARPA funding to be administered by the Children's Trust Fund. Funding cannot only support primary or secondary prevention efforts, meaning no tertiary efforts involving a family with an open or substantiated child abuse or neglect case can receive support through the program.

There were no comments from the public.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the allocation of \$762,432 for the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention funding to be administered by the Children's Trust Fund.

The chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program: Director Meier requested the commission approve allocation of \$405,070 in Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program for emergency supplies, technology support for families, professional development, and hazard pay or other staff costs. The Healthy Montana Families Program is Montana's MIECHV program that partners with local public health and nonprofit agencies to provide voluntary family services to pregnant women and families with infants and children under age six. The chair moved to modify the recommendation to include commission approval of any hazard pay prior to expenditure.

There were no comments from the public.

Director Meier moved to approve the allocation request with the added requirement: Approve the allocation of \$405,070 to Montana's Maternal, Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program for emergency supplies, technology support for families, professional development, and hazard pay or other staff costs, subject to further commission approval of any hazard pay prior to the expenditure for that purpose only.

The chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously. Representative Caferro voted yes by proxy of Senator McNally.

Substance Abuse Block Grant (SABG): Director Meier requested the commission approve the \$5,640,385 allocated to Montana through the Substance Abuse Block Grant ARPA funds to provide substance use disorder prevention, treatment and recovery services to youth and adults at risk for or living with SUD. This will not create an ongoing liability but will instead fill a gap that Medicaid and other sources will cover in the future. The funds will be distributed through established substance abuse disorder treatment providers and organizations with experience in SUD prevention, treatment, and recovery support services via the state procurement process.

Public comment was provided.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the \$5,640,385 allocated to Montana through the SABG to provide Substance Use Disorder (SUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery services to youth and adults at risk for or with a SUD.

The Chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Mental Health Block Grant (MHBG): Director Meier requested the commission approve the \$4,372,007 allocated to Montana through the Mental Health Block Grant ARPA Funds to provide comprehensive community mental health services. The allocation requires states set aside a minimum of 10% of their total allocation for first-episode psychosis or early serious mental illness programs and utilize at least 5% of funds from crisis services, so MDBG funding may not replace existing services. The primary projects funded include expanding First Episode Psychosis programs, increasing capacity of the 9-8-8 project, coordinating with counties to provide mental health outpatient services to individuals in detention centers, and increasing capacity of communities to provide recovery support to individuals needing supportive housing assistance.

Public comment was provided.

Senator Keenan moved to approve the proposal.

The chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously.

COVID-19 Vaccine Supports: Director Meier requested the commission approve the allocation of \$12,831,234 for the DPHHS Immunization Program to ensure equitable Covid-19 vaccine access and support local vaccination efforts, including outreach to vulnerable populations at increased risk of Covid-19 complications. These funds have been allocated to Montana exclusively for this purpose by the CDC, who has indicated this is a non-construction grant. Senator Glimm requested an amendment to the recommendation to direct funds towards areas where people have not been vaccinated. Around 60% of the money is used retrospectively.

Public comment was provided.

Director Meier moved to approve the request with modifications: Approve the allocation of \$12,831,234 in ARPA funding to the DPHHS Immunization Program to ensure equitable COVID-19 vaccine access and support local vaccination efforts, including outreach to vulnerable populations at increased risk of COVID-19 complications with a priority for counties with low vaccination rates, as consistent with federal law.

The Chair called a roll call vote. The motion passed on a 6-4 vote.

COVID-19 Vaccine Confidence: Director Meier requested the commission approve the allocation \$784,657 for Covid-19 vaccine confidence activities which supplement an existing CDC immunization grant. This allocation, unlike the previous allocation, is exclusively for the purpose of improving vaccine confidence that was provided to an existing CDC grant.

There were no comments from the public.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the allocation of \$784,657 for the Department of Public Health and Human Services for COVID-19 vaccine confidence activities which supplement an existing CDC immunization grant.

The chair called for a roll call vote. The motion passed on a 6-4 vote.

COVID-19 Variant Testing: Director Meier requested the commission approve the allocation of \$1,487,165 for testing of Covid-19 variants. This grant from the CDC provides funding to support the efforts of Montana to track the emergence of Covid-19 variants. The funding has a period of performance for three years, with budgets and workplans due to the CDC no later than August 13th, 2021. Variants have previously been detected in Montana.

Public comment was provided.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the allocation of \$1,487,165 for testing of COVID-19 variants.

The chair called for a roll call vote. The motion passed 7-3.

Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC) Cooperative Agreement Funding to Reopen Schools:

Director Meier requested the commission approve the allocation of \$32,191,069 for grant funding to support Covid-19 screening and testing to reopen schools and ensure safe operation. The federal government has provided financial resources for schools to establish Covid-19 screening and testing programs to support and maintain in-person learning. The grant must be used to directly support this effort for non-construction purposes. Once this funding is approved, a separate \$26,200,000 will be allocated to the department of administration for the MT Veterinarian Diagnostic and Ag Analytical Labs according to HB 632. Commission members moved to approve the recommendation so that the allocation of the authorized expenditures do not exceed 10% of the total amount without further approval of the commission.

No public comment was provided in-person or online.

Director Meier moved to approve the amended recommendation: Approve the allocation of \$32,191,069 for grant funding to support COVID-19 screening and testing to reopen schools and ensure their safe operation, authorized expenditures shall not exceed 10% of that amount without further approval of the Commission.

The Chair called for a voice vote. The motion passed unanimously.

COVID-19 Public Health Workforce: Director Meier requested the commission approve \$7,250,870 allocated to Montana for public health workforce capacity enhancements. The CDC is providing this funding to establish, expand, and sustain a public health workforce, including recruitment outside of Montana. The funding will be used to conduct needs assessments and gap analyses, enhance capacity to address Covid-19 and preparedness for similar outbreaks, provide statewide training through the University of Montana Public Health Training Center, and to create and expand the graduation-to-work pipeline for the public health workforce.

No public comment was provided in-person or online.

Senator Keenan moved to adopt the department's recommendation as written: Approve the \$7,250,870 allocated to Montana for public health workforce capacity enhancement.

The chair called for a voice vote. The request was approved on an 8-2 vote.

7. OTHER – 3:15-3:30PM

Next meetings are scheduled are June 24th at 10am, July 26th, and August 25th.

8. Adjourn – 3:30PM

Adjourned at 3:54pm