



November 26, 2025

Ryan Osmundson
State Budget Director
Office of Budget and Program Planning
PO Box 200802
Helena, MT 59620-0802

Director Osmundson,

Pursuant to HB 5, please accept the following as the proposed plan for the construction of a new behavioral health facility for the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). The statute reads as follows:

***Section 17. Transfer of funds – plan and reporting.** (1) By June 30, 2026, the state treasurer shall transfer \$26.5 million from the capital developments long-range building program account established in 17-7209 to the board of investments for the purposes of building a behavioral health facility.*

(2) Prior to the transfer in subsection (1) taking place, the budget director shall adopt a plan from the board of investments and the department of public health and human services on the facility type and location. The board of investments and the department of public health and human services shall report to the health and human services interim budget committee established in 5-12-501 on the progress of choosing the facility type and location. Once a plan is adopted by the budget director, the board of investments and the department of public health and human services shall provide a progress report at each subsequent meeting of the health and human services interim budget committee and each subsequent meeting of the long-range planning budget committee that are held prior to December 31, 2026.

(3) Any unspent funds must revert to the capital developments long-range building program account.

Facility Type and Location

As demonstrated in the enclosed analysis, DPHHS seeks to construct and operationalize a 32-bed forensic mental health facility. The facility would be designed with scalability in mind should the agency determine a need to leverage beds for the civil population in the future. From our perspective, it is most appropriate to "build up" to forensic facility

standards and be able to scale down as deemed necessary. As many Montanans know, DPHHS has experienced surging demand for forensic psychiatric services over the past several years, resulting in a problematic statewide waitlist that adversely impacts local communities. While DPHHS has taken a variety of steps to try to address this issue operationally, its bed capacity remains severely limited, and the agency believes that the funds granted to us by the Legislature must be prioritized for the forensic population.

The Board of Investments (BOI) will oversee construction of the facility using its established real estate development process, which has successfully delivered, owned, leased, and managed income distribution from directly held real estate securities for over 40 years. BOI and its contractors will obtain all required permits, annexations, zoning, and other local approvals in full compliance with applicable ordinances and resolutions. Upon completion of construction, DPHHS will enter into a lease agreement with BOI for a minimum term of 20 years.

DPHHS has selected Laurel, Montana as the location for the facility. Laurel provides access to a critical health care workforce and infrastructure necessary to ensure the facility's success. Laurel's geographic location is ideally situated for improving access and transportation logistics for patients and their families, staff, and law enforcement across central and eastern Montana.

As you know, the Legislature allocated \$26.5 million for this project to BOI, pending your approval. However, it is anticipated that these funds may be insufficient to construct a "hardened" facility designed to safely and securely serve a forensic population. Once BOI can more precisely determine the total project costs, DPHHS is prepared to allocate additional funding from the remaining Behavioral Health Systems for Future Generations (BHSFG) state special revenue capital account balance, which currently holds an available balance of \$41,970,000, to address any amount exceeding the HB 5 transfer. The Office of Budget and Program Planning (OBPP), as the statutory approving authority, will be consulted throughout this process.

DPHHS and BOI have worked in strong partnership for several months. Specialized consultants have been engaged to support facility research and design, as well as the development of an effective program structure. With your approval, work can begin immediately to continue strengthening Montana's behavioral health system.

Thank you for your timely attention to this urgent matter.

Signed by:

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Charles T. Brereton

Director

Department of Public Health and Human Services

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Executive Director

Montana Board of Investments

Attachments:

1. "Building a Foundation for Future Generations: Montana's New Behavioral Health Facility"
2. "Frequently Asked Questions: Montana's New Behavioral Health Facility"
3. "Securities Classification of the Construction of Behavioral Health Unit Pursuant to Section 17 of House Bill 5 from the 2025 Legislative Session"
4. Letter from the City of Laurel, MT
5. Draft Floor Plan