



2800 Tenth Avenue North
P.O. Box 37000
Billings, Montana 59107-7000

Dear

As a physician, I know the importance and value of providing young students with a strong education in the science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. From 2006 to 2013, as the Chief of Primary Care at Billings Clinic, I learned that the need for qualified care givers across the healthcare continuum is growing rapidly and will continue to grow at an exponential rate as the baby boomer generation begins to seek and require more services. From medical assistants to lab and radiology techs, to nurses, to physician assistants, to doctors, the career opportunities are just going to explode. Indeed at this point in time there are shortages in Billings in all of these areas and the need to deepen exposure to and interest in these fields has never been more critical.

I have also learned that "Quality of the Schools" is one of the most important topics during our recruitment conversations and weighs very heavily when young professionals are deciding whether or not they want to come to work and raise their families here. We need our schools to be topnotch and competitive if we wish to see our community thrive and grow – a cutting edge STEM curriculum is foundational to that goal.

One of the single most important factors to a quality healthcare system in our community is a quality school system that provides our youth with a robust education that prepares them for careers and college upon graduation. As I hear my young patients talk about what they are learning and what they want to be when they grow up, I see a need for more hands-on, innovative learning in the math and science areas. Our students need to be able to integrate technology into their daily learning. The need for a solid STEM education that supports 21st century skills is evident in our schools. It is essential to the health of our community that we provide a school system that continues to retain and attract the highest quality physicians to our community and a school system that is preparing our students for future jobs in the healthcare industry.

Most importantly, as a parent, I want my child to love to learn. Increasing opportunities for project based activities while solving real world problems through innovative thinking will help all of our young people prepare for life beyond high school. As I made my way through McKinley, Lincoln Junior High and Senior High I encountered wonderful teachers who inspired me to pursue interests far beyond Billings; I returned because I know that this is truly a special place, and I want my daughter to get the education here that she needs to flourish and contribute wherever she may go in life.

So, as a graduate, as a mother, as a committed member of this community, as a pediatrician and as a healthcare administrator tasked with growing our work force, I strongly encourage you to award this grant application to support STEM education and technology integration in our community's schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah G. Agnew".

Deborah G. Agnew, M.D.
Pediatrician and Medical Director, Special Projects