

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

June 20, 2025

The Honorable Brandon Ler
Speaker of the House
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Matt Regier
President of the Senate
State Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Ler and President Regier:

Working together, we've provided record support for education, focusing our investments on our classrooms where they make the biggest difference for students and educators, not on bureaucracy. We've invested in programs that support teachers, students, and classrooms while also expanding educational opportunities. Over the last four-plus years, we've demonstrated our shared commitment to help ensure Montana's students are equipped to reach their full, outstanding potential.

During the 2023 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed, and I signed into law House Bill 352, which established an Early Literacy Targeted Intervention Program aimed at improving the number of students reading proficiently by third grade. During the 2025 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed, and I signed into law House Bill 338, which expands the focus of the Early Literacy Targeted Intervention Program beyond just reading to include numeracy, recognizing the necessity of the early development of both reading and math skills to future academic success.

While I appreciate the sponsor's intent to enhance the Early Literacy Targeted Intervention Program, House Bill 628 would make substantive changes to the program before we've analyzed the results, outcomes, and effectiveness of the current program, including its expansion into math with House Bill 338.

Turning to the fiscal impact of House Bill 628, the bill is projected to cost more than \$7.3 million over the next four years, even as we don't know the results and impact of our existing reforms. Of note, the bill's fiscal note cautions House Bill 628 will increase local property taxes by \$533,000 starting in Fiscal Year 2027.

Our Montana Constitution requires us to balance our budget. In 2021 and 2023, I am proud that we worked together to deliver balanced budgets that were not only fiscally responsible, but also allowed us to seize the opportunity to let hardworking Montanans keep more of what they earn. The budget proposal I sent to the Legislature for the 2025 Legislative Session was fiscally conservative, keeping spending below inflation.

The budget and other bills with hefty price tags that the Legislature passed, however, are not fiscally responsible. Therefore, I will keenly review the budget and spending bills the Legislature passed, making some difficult decisions to protect taxpayers and their hard-earned resources. Hardworking Montanans expect us to be fiscally responsible.

Therefore, in accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 628: "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING THE EARLY LITERACY TARGETED INTERVENTION PROGRAM; INCREASING THE SCOPE OF THE TARGETED INTERVENTIONS TO INCLUDE SCHOLASTIC LITERACY; PROVIDING THAT A SCHOOL DISTRICT MAY OPT IN TO ENROLLING NO MORE THAN ONE ON-TARGET STUDENT FOR EVERY FIVE ELIGIBLE STUDENTS IN A CLASSROOM-BASED INTERVENTION OR JUMPSTART INTERVENTION; PROVIDING THAT A SCHOOL DISTRICT MAY COUNT AN ON-TARGET STUDENT ENROLLED IN A CLASSROOM-BASED OR JUMPSTART INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR ANB PURPOSES; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-7-1801, 20-7-1802, 20-7-1803, AND 20-7-1804, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE AND AN APPLICABILITY DATE."

Sincerely,



Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State