

February 28, 2023

Chair Llew Jones, Vice Chair Bob Keenan, and Vice Chair Mary Caferro
House Appropriations Committee
Montana State Legislature
Montana State Capitol Room 102
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Chair Jones, Vice Chair Keenan, and Vice Chair Caferro,

We, the City Commission of Bozeman, strongly support funding for a new facility for Gallatin College included in HB 5. Since its founding, Gallatin College has proven to be one of our strongest community assets serving the Gallatin Valley and the entire State of Montana.

Each year, more than 700 Montanans enroll in Gallatin College to study trades such as carpentry, HVAC systems, and plumbing. With the creation of a new building, the College estimates they can enroll as many as 2,000 students at a time. These are students for whom a traditional four-year degree is not the best option. The additional 1,300 students will graduate with in-demand degrees. In fact, Gallatin College has a Workforce Advisory Committee including small business owners, developers, and nationally respected experts in the fields providing input to the Administration about which programs are needed to support our growing economy and workforce.

Further, Gallatin College is able to educate students at a cost effective rate of \$237.69 per credit hour. For a full time taking 12 credits at Gallatin College, the cost per semester is \$1,826.51. At such a reasonable price point, many students can graduate into jobs with salaries starting above \$50,000 such as a photonics technician or an aviation mechanic for less than \$10,000 in tuition and less debt which allows more of their hard earned dollars to circulate in our economy.

A standalone building for Gallatin College recognizes the importance of the College to young people throughout our region. It highlights the dignity of a career in the trades and other valuable industries. It draws attention to the prestige of the programs. It will encourage more high school seniors to see the value of pursuing such a degree.

A standalone building at last places Gallatin College on the same footing as all the other two-year colleges in our state. Further, by locating the facility on Montana State's campus, students at the College can more easily access the same support services as those pursuing four-year degrees. Finally, students are exposed to the 250 plus opportunities to further their education beyond Gallatin College if they so choose.

Because our economy requires a highly trained workforce, an investment in Gallatin College is an investment in the future of all Montanans. It is an investment in affordable housing. It is an investment in high-quality medical care. It is an investment in our small businesses who are the backbone of the State's economy.

The \$23.5 million appropriated by the State and an additional \$22.5 in authority only funding for the project will provide a return on investment for our workers, young people, seniors, businesses, and residents from every walk of life all over Montana. Therefore, we strongly urge a do pass on HB 5 as amended to fully fund a building for Gallatin College, provide long-term stability for the College, and open the doors of economic opportunity to many, many more Montanans.

Sincerely,

Mayor Cyndy Andrus

Deputy Mayor Terry
Cunningham

Commissioner I-Ho Pomeroy

Commissioner Jennifer Madgic

Commissioner Christopher Coburn