

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
STATE OF MONTANA

GREG GIANFORTE
GOVERNOR



KRISTEN JURAS
LT. GOVERNOR

May 15, 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 provided record support for education, focusing our investments on our classrooms where they make the biggest difference, not on bureaucracy. We've invested in programs that support teachers, parents, and students while also expanding educational opportunities. Thanks to the historic funding in The STARS Act, the future of Montana's education system is bright.

Over the last few years, we've seen student math scores throughout our nation decline dramatically, due in part to drawn-out, draconian-era school shutdowns recommended by federal officials. These school shutdowns lasted longer than necessary, and they have, and will continue to have, long-term consequences on the success and mental health of our young people. Facing this problem head on, the Board of Public Education (BPE) and Office of Public Instruction (OPI) worked to modernize Montana's state content standards for mathematics instruction prior to the legislative session.

House Bill 462 appropriates \$5 million in one-time-only funding to advance policies around High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) which are designed to help students use critical thinking skills to better understand mathematical concepts, instead of promoting rote memorization.

While OPI testified in support of House Bill 462, the Superintendent believes it is unnecessary at this time, because without House Bill 462, "OPI could still work with the Interim Committees, BPE, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, and local districts to implement the new math standards and help schools with utilizing HQIM," as the Superintendent writes in the attached letter.

I appreciate the sponsor's intent to align school curriculum, instruction, professional development, and state standards around the principles of HQIM through House Bill 462. I believe, however, OPI, BPE, and other educational partners already have the authority and ability to accomplish many of the goals of this legislation. Further, I believe many of the other education funding bills I've signed into law this year can be put toward supporting these efforts.

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 462: "AN ACT REVISING EDUCATION LAWS RELATED TO STATE SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION; CREATING A PROCESS THROUGH WHICH HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS ARE IDENTIFIED AS PART OF THE CONTENT STANDARD REVISION PROCESS; REQUIRING THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION, CONTINGENT ON APPROPRIATION FROM THE LEGISLATURE, TO PROVIDE REDUCED-COST ACCESS TO INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND CURRICULUM-ALIGNED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT CHOOSE TO ADOPT HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING AN APPROPRIATION; AMENDING SECTIONS 20-7-101, 20-7-113, AND 20-7-114, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Sincerely,

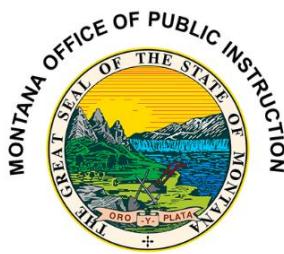


Greg Gianforte
Governor

Enclosure

cc: Legislative Services Division
Christi Jacobsen, Secretary of State

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PO Box 202501
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Director Ryan Osmundson
Governor's Office of Budget Program & Planning
PO Box 200802
Helena MT 59620-0802

Director Osmundson,

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) appreciates the Governor's efforts to advance a conservative budget that puts Montana on a prosperous path. We also recognize the hard work done by legislators during the 69th legislative session to advance education bills that put our students first. Knowing that difficult decisions must always be made when allocating government resources, the OPI wants to be a pragmatic partner to ensure that resources are most effectively directed and utilized.

HB462 appropriates \$5 million to the OPI for implementation of newly revised state math standards that were adopted by the Board of Public Education (BPE) last year, with a focus on developing High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for districts at a reduced cost. We appreciate Representative Bedey's vision to ensure Montana students have access to the best instructional materials. For background, BPE and OPI initiated the process of revising standards for math between 2022-2024. Per MCA 2-4-405, OPI produced an economic impact statement under the previous superintendent estimating the total state and local costs for implementing the new math standards to be roughly \$30 million.

However, we do not believe it would cost \$30 million to implement the new math standards, which includes a required third year of high school math instead of just two. OPI supported an HB2 appropriation of \$2.5 million per year of the 2027 biennium for the implementation of the new math standards, as well as HB462 which would tie this HB2 appropriation to the HQIM policies contained in the bill.

OPI supports the policy goals of assisting schools with HQIM, but we also understand the budget constraints currently facing the Governor. We believe that if HB462 is vetoed OPI could still work with the Interim Committees, BPE, the Office of Commissioner of Higher Education, and local districts to implement the new math standards and help schools with utilizing HQIM.

We appreciate the fiscal leadership demonstrated by the Governor and you during the legislative session, and we value the opportunity to provide input. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide additional information.

Best,

Susie Hedalen

Susie Hedalen
Superintendent of Public Instruction