PO Box 511  Choteau, MT 59422

July 30, 2015

Craig Molgaard, Ph.D., M.P.H.
University of Montana
School of Public and Community Health Sciences
Missoula, Montana

Dear Dr. Molgaard,

On behalf of the Montana Public Health Association (MPHA), please accept this letter in support of a public health Ph.D. program at the University of Montana. MPHA is the Montana affiliate of the American Public Health Association and is a diverse member driven organization with a mission of seeking optimal health and working to shape the public health policy for all Montanans.

A 2012 survey by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services found that over 50% of the lead local public health officials in Montana are planning to retire within 10 years (with approximately 35% retiring within 5 years). A 2013 survey completed by the National Association of County-City Health Officials showed 25% of local health department top executives are age 60 or older. These statistics display the great need, both at the state and national level, for the development of new public health practitioners to replace the aging public health workforce. The development of a Ph.D. program in public health at the University of Montana would help to ensure that this new workforce has the training they need to be leaders in public health.

MPHA also recognizes that public health is an evolving field. Each year public health confronts new topics from emerging infectious diseases and the boom of chronic disease to funding issues and new healthcare regulations. There is a large need to ensure that research in the public health field is ongoing and addressing the new emerging issues. A Ph.D. program would contribute to the research field and ensure that research topics specific to Montana are addressed.

We urge you to develop a Ph.D. program in public health for the reasons listed above and look forward to working with you to help promote the program to practitioners across the state.

Sincerely,

Sue Hansen
President, Montana Public Health Association