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Testimony to the Joint Subcommittee of the
 Assembly Committee on Ways and Means
 And the Senate Committee on Finance
 Presented by Tammra Pearce, Executive Director of Bristlecone
 Family Resources
 March 1, 2007

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Vision:

*To strengthen our community
 by reducing drug and alcohol
 abuse and addictions among
 individuals and families.*

Mission:

*Our mission is to improve
 people's lives by helping them
 overcome addiction. We do this
 by addressing the unique
 needs of each individual and
 providing customized treatment
 services. Our Programs are
 accessible and affordable to
 meet the needs of our
 community.*

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Tammra Pearce, Executive
 Director

Bristlecone Family Resources is northern Nevada's oldest and largest addiction treatment agency, operating in the community for the past 40 years. Bristlecone provides treatment services for drug, alcohol, gambling, and tobacco addiction. We provide Washoe County's only detox program in addition to the full spectrum of services including residential, transitional living, outpatient, after care and recovery support, and family counseling services. Our methods are driven by research and evidence-based practices that have been proven effective. We serve any adult man or woman seeking services and refuse no one based on an ability to pay. We operate a 38-bed facility and serve more than 500 outpatient clients at any one time. In the course of a year we treat approximately 1,500 unduplicated clients and interact with an average of 100 families every day.

Bristlecone's vision is to strengthen our community by reducing drug and alcohol abuse and addictions among individuals and families.

Bristlecone's mission is to improve people's lives by helping them overcome addiction. We do this by addressing the unique needs of each individual and providing customized treatment services. Our programs are accessible and affordable to meet the needs of our community. More than 65 percent of our clientele have children under age 18 and to address that reality, Bristlecone has a family-focused treatment approach. We believe that healthy parents can raise healthy children and that providing quality and affordable services to parents is critical to break the cycle of addiction. Case management is a key component to our treatment services and our staff is focused on addressing the needs not only of our clients, but of their families as well.

The past year was a difficult one. An internal evaluation of our programs by the Board of Directors revealed that our adolescent treatment program – known as SageWind – was losing more than \$150,000 a year. This loss was draining our other programs, only a few of which operated on a barely break even basis. We consulted with Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Agency of SAPTA (formerly known as SAPTA) to determine if there was any additional funding to reduce the strain on the adolescent services budget and were told that simply wasn't possible. The Board of Directors determined that the agency could simply no longer sustain this kind of loss and the difficult decision was made to transfer adolescent treatment services to another agency. We worked closely with SAPTA in this process to ensure that there was no interruption of services and that teens in our community continued to be served.

Shortly after this decision was made, it was time for us to submit our grant request to SAPTA for funding of our adult detoxification, residential, and outpatient programs. We reduced our request from \$1.8 million to \$1.3 million to reflect the \$500,000 that funded adolescent services that would be going to a new agency. The \$1.3 million requested was to maintain flat funding for our adult programs and increase services for highly utilized programs. Unfortunately, we were awarded \$800,000 of the \$1.3 million we requested – a \$500,000 cut that represented a 38 percent reduction in our primary funding. We appealed this decision but our appeal was not successful.

To adjust to our new funding level, we cut staff positions and had to eliminate 12 beds – a 24 percent reduction in services. We went from a 50-bed facility to a 38-bed facility. With the support of our board and our community, we have made it work. We have expanded our fundraising and private grant writing efforts and generate slightly more than \$100,000 from events and community grants. We are currently looking at relocating

our facility because our current site is in the process of being acquired by the Washoe County Flood Control Project. We also are focused on relocation to allow us to consolidate all of our programs into one location. Currently, the Adult Drug Court Program is housed in a separate facility to maintain its close proximity to the court. It is our desire that by housing every program at one location – preferably in the core of Washoe County to best serve our clients, social services, and the courts – that we can even further increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our operations and management to devote even more of our resources to direct treatment and client services.

The Washoe County Flood Control Committee has been extraordinarily generous in waiving the rent at our main facility to help us save for our move. In addition, the City of Reno has really stepped up to assist us in identifying a vacant building or empty lot for our new home. We have local architects and contractors who have offered to remodel or build a facility for cost, and our board is on the verge of securing an investor for this ambitious project. It is our goal that our next facility has space for 50 beds in the hope that we can find the funding to restore the services that were lost over the past year. We know we can fill those beds – the demand is there.

State-supported agencies like Bristlecone are facing unprecedented challenges because of the prevalence of methamphetamine abuse. With more than 60 percent of our clients using meth as their drug of choice, this is truly becoming an epidemic. The recent airing of the documentary “Crystal Darkness” on every local television station has done wonders in raising awareness and understanding of the impacts of meth addiction on our community. We are seeing an unprecedented awareness among the general population about the signs of addiction and the costs to all of us. In the days following the broadcast of the documentary, Bristlecone received more than 100 calls from people in the community seeking

information and services for themselves or someone they know and care about. Hits to our website and requests for treatment via email also spiked after the documentary was aired. While this awareness is critical in fighting meth addiction, it just further illustrates the need for more treatment services in all of our communities.

It costs our agency about \$70,000 a year to operate one bed – taking into account staff and facility costs, treatment materials, and operating expenses. We receive \$36,000 a year from the state to operate that bed. That represents a 52 percent reimbursement rate for services. We fill the gap with internal efficiencies, fundraising and private donations, and by soliciting a large amount of in-kind contributions from our community for things like food, clothes and linens for clients, and some professional services.

While the budget before you represents an improvement for treatment agencies like Bristlecone, the need is great and continues to grow. And what is most concerning is the issue of stable funding. The cuts our agency experienced last year were deep. A smaller agency might not have survived, leaving a huge gap in services for our community. Providing a caseload growth formula in the budget would help address this issue and allow for some stability for these agencies. . Substance abuse treatment is the only human services program in the state that does not have a formula for caseload growth. It is clear we have a need to expand capacity for treatment, a challenge that has proven difficult for agencies like Bristlecone when funding varies significantly from one grant period to the next.

I share this information not to place blame but to make clear the reality of the situation in our state. We are experiencing a treatment crisis and the costs are severe in terms of crime, homelessness, domestic violence, child abuse, lost productivity, and more. This crisis impacts every community in

our state and we all pay the price. . I urge you to do whatever you can to expand the capacity for treatment in our state and help ensure a stable source of funding for these important programs.