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April 24, 2025

#### VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Greg Gianforte  
Governor of Montana

#### Re: Avoid Tax Burden Shifts to Business Properties

Dear Governor Gianforte:

On behalf of the Council On State Taxation (COST), I respectfully urge you to reject the enactment of property tax legislation this year that would focus property tax relief on households and shift some of that property tax burden to businesses. COST fully supports legislation to control the growth of property taxes due to significant increases in property values; however, the control method used should not disproportionately shift the property tax burden from household properties to business properties.

#### About COST

COST is a nonprofit trade association based in Washington, DC. COST was formed in 1969 as an advisory committee to the Council of State Chambers of Commerce and today has an independent membership of approximately 500 major corporations engaged in interstate and international business. COST's objective is to preserve and promote the equitable and nondiscriminatory state and local taxation of multijurisdictional business entities. Many COST members conduct business operations and pay property taxes in Montana.

#### Fair and Equitable Property Taxes

The COST Board of Directors has adopted a formal policy statement addressing the need for the states to have fair and equitable property tax systems<sup>1</sup>. The policy position states:

*State and local property tax systems must be fairly administered and tax burdens equitably distributed among taxpayers. A property tax system that is inefficient or that disproportionately falls upon business is not equitable and will negatively impact a state's business tax climate. (Emphasis added.)*

Businesses are the economic drivers that create jobs in Montana and a tax structure that penalizes business investment in the State runs counter to fostering a positive business

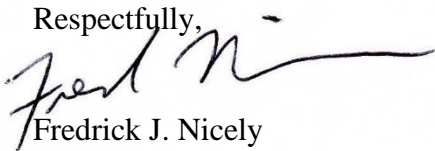
<sup>1</sup> See COST Policy Statement: [www.cost.org/globalassets/cost/state-tax-resources-pdf-pages/cost-policy-positions/fair-and-equitable-property-tax-systems.pdf](http://www.cost.org/globalassets/cost/state-tax-resources-pdf-pages/cost-policy-positions/fair-and-equitable-property-tax-systems.pdf).

environment. Currently, 45% of all taxes paid by businesses in Montana are property taxes (\$1.4 billion / \$3.1 billion).<sup>2</sup> This is 9% higher than the national average of 36%. Lastly, business property taxes in Montana constituted 20% of total taxes (\$1.4 billion / \$7 billion) paid by both households and business, this is 4% higher than the national average of 16%.

### **Conclusion**

In the last days of this year's legislative session, we encourage you to address property tax issues in a manner that mitigates property tax shifts to the business sector.

Respectfully,



Fredrick J. Nicely

cc: Rep. Brandon Ler, Speaker, Montana House of Representatives  
Sen. Matt Regier, President, Montana Senate  
Rep. Paul Fielder, Chair, House Taxation Committee, Montana Legislature  
Sen. Greg Hertz, Chair, Senate Taxation Committee, Montana Legislature  
COST Board of Directors  
Patrick J. Reynolds, COST President & Executive Director

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<sup>2</sup> All the figures provided in this paragraph are derived from COST/EY/STRI "Total State and Local Taxes" study issued December 2024 based on FY 2023. The study is available at: [www.cost.org/globalassets/cost/state-tax-resources-pdf-pages/cost-studies-articles-reports/score\\_ey-50-state-tax-burden-study\\_final\\_121824.pdf](http://www.cost.org/globalassets/cost/state-tax-resources-pdf-pages/cost-studies-articles-reports/score_ey-50-state-tax-burden-study_final_121824.pdf).