

Jewish Disability Advocacy Day



The Jewish Federations
OF NORTH AMERICA



Protect the Financial Security of People with Disabilities: Co-Sponsor and Pass the Bipartisan ABLE Age Adjustment Act

The Stephen Beck Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2014 for the first time allowed people with disabilities under age 26 and their families to establish tax-advantaged savings and investment plans called ABLE Accounts. These accounts ease financial strain for people with disabilities by allowing them to withdraw their own tax-free savings to pay for costly disability-related expenses. Although the ABLE Act continues to provide people with disabilities up to age 26 with a new measure of financial security, this important program is now in jeopardy and many people with disabilities who become disabled later in life have been left out.

The bipartisan-supported ABLE Age Adjustment Act, introduced in the last Congress as S. 817/H.R. 1874 and soon to be reintroduced, opens up the ABLE program to people with disabilities who become disabled later in life (prior to age 46), thereby correcting this inequity and ensuring the long-term viability of the ABLE program.

What the ABLE Age Adjustment Act Would Do:

- Currently, those eligible for ABLE accounts must have acquired their disability prior to age 26. The ABLE Age Adjustment Act would raise the age of onset of disability from age 26 to 46. By limiting eligibility for ABLE accounts to those who acquired their disability prior to age 26, the original ABLE Act effectively barred many individuals who acquire their disability later in life, including many people with spinal cord injuries, Lou Gehrig's disease, and multiple sclerosis. Becoming eligible to enroll in this common-sense program would help people with these disabilities bear the costs of their expenses.
- Importantly, money saved in ABLE accounts does not count against asset limits for Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income. The money can be withdrawn tax-free to pay for disability-related expenses, like costly new therapies and durable medical equipment.

The ABLE Age Adjustment Act is Needed to Sustain the Program and Help Millions More:

- Currently, 41 states and the District of Columbia have launched their own ABLE programs, but only about 33,000 individuals with disabilities have established these accounts. The low number of ABLE accounts jeopardizes the sustainability of state ABLE programs, due to their start-up and operating costs.
- The National Association of State Treasurers (NAST) (state treasurers administer most state ABLE programs) estimates that 390,000 more people will need to establish ABLE accounts for the program to remain viable beyond 2021.

- To achieve this benchmark of an additional 390,000 accounts, NAST recommends expanding the number of eligible people by raising the age cap for ABLE accounts to age 46. This will allow six million more people to enroll in an ABLE program.
- Some state ABLE programs are in danger. Many states took out loans against other general fund programs, and some states are funding the programs annually but only for a few years. Congress never appropriated funds to the ABLE program's implementation. Once these loans are called, many state leaders have made it clear that the funding will end.
- The original ABLE Act took ten years to pass. By passing the ABLE Age Adjustment Act now, Congress has the chance to make a successful program sustainable for years to come. This legislation must be preserved to continue to improve the lives of people with disabilities and their families.
- In Judaism, we believe in B'tzelem Elohim, that every person is created in the image of G-d. By supporting the ABLE Age Adjustment Act, we are putting that teaching into action.

Please cosponsor and support passage of the ABLE Age Adjustment Act.

If your member of Congress would like to co-sponsor the bill, or for more information, please contact Aaron Kaufman, Senior Legislative Associate, at (202) 736-5865 or aaron.kaufman@jewishfederations.org

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