

I would like to thank the committee members for their time and consideration of SB 571.

I would like to express my support of this bill, as it was my idea. My motivation for this idea comes from working with my clients who are job seekers with disabilities. I provide job coaching services to a client who had to quit his full-time job and get a part-time job to address his medical and mental health needs. At this same time his rent was almost doubled. With no other resources, he took the money out of his retirement account early to pay his rent. This resulted in him paying the taxes and penalties for taking his monies out before the age of retirement. I was motivated to ask if there was a better option for people who qualify for ABLE accounts to invest, plan, and take care of their eligible expenses in the future.

I assist people with disabilities in finding employment. Many times they turn down the retirement, not because they don't want the money, but because it will count as a resource. The Social Security Administration has set a resource limits of \$2,000 for people receiving SSI/Medicaid. When a person receiving SSI/Medicaid has reached more than \$2,000 in resources they will forfeit their benefits. Medicaid benefits pay for job coaching, residential, medical and other community supports to help people live an independent quality of life. Putting money in the ABLE account protects the person's resource so they can use the funds for expenses include housing, education, transportation, health, prevention and wellness, employment training and support, assistive technology and personal support services. ABLE accounts are investment account and individuals can keep their account for their retirement.

It is also important to note that it is the responsibility of each state to reclaim as much of the Medicaid that was paid out by taking back resources upon the person's death. The ABLE account is a way for the state to reclaim resources that are not used by the individual. This allows the state to use these funds to help other Medicaid recipients.

Other resources that could be encouraged to be sent to anyone's retirement or ABLE account include retention payments and bonuses. Retention payments and bonuses also count as an unearned income AKA resource. I don't believe this taking any change in law, but rather education about giving all employees options about putting monies to their retirement, ABLE account, or pay check depending on what works best for each person's life goals and needs.

I want to say that a good idea is just that, without the right person to make that good idea happen. I want to thank Senator Gelser Blouin for understanding the complexity of this issue. I hope this can add to the quality of life for people who choose to use ABLE accounts and work.

Respectfully,

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"A winner is a dreamer who never gave up."~ NELSON MANDELA