



State Senate passes ABLE bill to help Wisconsin people with disabilities, veterans earn and save more

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Today, the state Senate passed [SB 122](#) a strongly bi-partisan bill that will help Wisconsin people with disabilities set up tax exempt Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) savings accounts to pay qualified expenses--including education, housing, and transportation costs--without affecting eligibility for Medicaid or Social Security.

Medicaid funded long term care programs like Family Care and IRIS that people with disabilities rely on to live independently have strict income and asset limits (\$2000) that make it impossible to save for rent deposits, downpayments on vehicles or homes, and other routine expenses. ABLE accounts allow people with disabilities to work, earn, and save more without losing access to in-home supports and other needed services that are only available in Medicaid-funded programs.

The bill directs the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) to find the best ABLE option for Wisconsin residents--either entering into an agreement with another state already managing ABLE accounts or starting a program in Wisconsin. This would make it easier for people with disabilities to understand their options and set up accounts.

"Even the savviest people with disabilities and families describe a daunting and overwhelming process of evaluating different state plans. Many find it too hard and give up," said Beth Swedeen, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. "This bill will make ABLE accounts more accessible for Wisconsin families and advance the Legislature's continuing efforts to empower individuals with disabilities."

In December 2022, Congress expanded who can set up an ABLE account to people who acquire a disability by age 46 (the previous age limit was 26), making this an important tool for many more Wisconsinites.

Now ABLE accounts are an option for an estimated six million more people, including about one million military veterans, people who develop early onset degenerative diseases, or experience traumatic injury.

BPDD appreciates the legislature's effort to find solutions that make it easier for Wisconsin residents to save for disability related expenses. This bill is a direct reflection of a legislatively required analysis and recommendations conducted by the Department of Financial Institutions. The bill enjoys bi-partisan support which reflects the broad constituency across the state that will benefit from its passage and enactment into law.

BPDD urges the Assembly to take prompt action to pass the Assembly companion (AB 121) and advance this important legislation to the Governor's desk.



BPDD thanks the co-sponsors of this legislation including

Senators Jacque, Taylor, Ballweg, Felzkowski, Hesselbein, Larson, Quinn, Roys, Spreitzer, Carpenter, Agard and Representatives Mursau, Subeck, C. Anderson, J.

Anderson, Andraca, Bare, Behnke, Bodden, Brandtjen, Conley, Dittrich, Donovan, Doyle, Edming, Haywood, Jacobson, Joers, Knodl, Moses, O'Connor, Ohnstad, Ratcliff, Schmidt, Shankland, Sinicki and Stubbs.