

Saving for an Uncertain Future: How the ABLE Act Can Help Individuals with Disabilities and Their Families

Opening Statement of Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.
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This morning we convene the Finance Committee Subcommittee on Taxation and IRS Oversight to discuss an important topic—how we can help individuals with disabilities and their families save for an uncertain future.

I would like to thank Chairman Wyden and Ranking Member Hatch for the opportunity to hold this hearing and our Subcommittee Ranking Member, Senator Enzi, for joining me today. I would also like to thank Senator Burr from North Carolina, who has been tireless in his efforts to create a more sound future for those living with disabilities through the ABLE Act.

Right now, the tax code provides incentives for Americans to save for important priorities, such as retirement or college, through tax-advantaged savings accounts. However, those with disabilities are not afforded the same opportunity to save for their future.

In fact, many adults with disabilities cannot save money to cover costs related to their disability without becoming ineligible for programs like Social Security Disability Insurance or Medicaid that provide a necessary lifeline to so many in need.

This dynamic forces individuals with disabilities to rely on their family or community, but this support is often not enough to cover their long-term needs.

Take the experience of Sara Wolff, a fellow Pennsylvanian who is here to testify today. Sara has two jobs but has to carefully plan to ensure she never amasses more than two-thousand in assets or lose critical benefits.

This situation is unacceptable, and Congress can and should help resolve it. Individuals with disabilities should be able to save for their future costs on an even playing field with other citizens.

The ABLE Act would fix this unfair dynamic by creating tax-free savings accounts for individuals with disabilities. Specifically, it would build on the popular Section 529 college savings account program to allow families who have a loved one with a disability to similarly save tax-free for qualified disability expenses. Beneficiaries will be able to make tax-free withdrawals from their ABLE accounts to cover basic needs like education, housing, transportation and healthcare. Benefits provided through private insurance, the Medicaid program, the beneficiary's employer, and other sources would be supplemented, but not supplanted by the legislation.

The ABLE Act is an affirmation that people with disabilities have the ability to live a life full of opportunity and achievement. Today's hearing will address the need for ABLE accounts from the perspective of individuals living with disabilities, advocates, lawmakers and financial

planners. Through the testimony of our witnesses, we will highlight the challenges individuals and families face planning for the future, the benefits and drawbacks of the current savings tools available, and how ABLE accounts can provide an additional tool for those in need.

It is my hope that the record we build today will pave the way to passage of the ABLE Act, which enjoys wide bipartisan support in both the Senate and House of Representatives with 75 cosponsors in the Senate and 366 in the House of Representatives.

No other bill in Congress has this level of bipartisan, bicameral support. This level of support is a testament to the hard work of families and other disability advocates, many of whom are present here today. It also reflects the importance of what the ABLE Act does.

We want all 535 Members of Congress behind this important legislation, and we need to build on our momentum in order to get the bill passed when we return from the August recess.

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