



For Immediate Release

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State Senate passes SB 158 to help people with disabilities earn and save more

(Madison) – Today the state Senate passed SB 158, which takes concrete steps to make Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts more accessible for Wisconsin families, so people with disabilities can earn and save more.

“As families plan for the future, ABLE accounts are an important tool that can support people with disabilities in their careers and help them reach their full potential,” said Beth Swedeen, Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities Executive Director. “Unfortunately, many people with disabilities and families are unaware of ABLE accounts, or struggle to find information and make decisions about how to set them up.”

ABLE accounts allow people who have a disability that developed before age 26 to have a tax-exempt savings account set up in their name that can cover allowable expenses, without impacting their eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Medicaid.

Allowable expenses include education, employment training and support, assistive technology and personal support services, housing, transportation, health, prevention and wellness, financial management and administrative services, legal fees, expenses for oversight and monitoring, and funeral and burial expenses.

“We hear from people with disabilities who want to work and earn more but also rely on Medicaid programs for health and daily cares that have strict income and asset limits,” said Swedeen. “Congress recognized people with disabilities should not lose the supports provided by Medicaid and Social Security that help them become and stay employed when they passed the ABLE Act. This bill will help Wisconsin realize Congress’s intent.”

The bill requires the Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) to examine the pros and cons of opening a Wisconsin-run ABLE program for residents or contracting with another state to administer an ABLE program for Wisconsin residents. This analysis will position the legislature to make an informed decision on the best way to improve access to ABLE accounts for people with disabilities and their families.

BPDD thanks Sen. Jacque (R-DePere) and Rep. Mursau (R-Crivitz) for their leadership on this bill.

The bill must now pass the full Assembly before it can be sent to the Governor to be signed into law. BPDD is pleased to work with legislative leaders and constituents on legislation like SB 158/AB 167 that improves the lives of people with disabilities and help solve real challenges that Wisconsinites face every day across our state.

BPDD is charged under the federal Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act with advocacy, capacity building, and systems change to improve self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for people with developmental disabilities More about BPDD https://wi-bpdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Legislative_Overview_BPDD_Final_01042020.pdf.