



November 18, 2019

United States Senate Special Committee on Aging
c/o The Honorable Senator Susan Collins, Chairman
G31 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Collins and Members of the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging,

It's been five years since the Stephen Beck, Jr. Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act was passed, finally empowering Americans with disabilities to save money for qualified disability expenses without the fear of losing federal benefits. This was a major step forward for people in the United States who live with a disability. However, as we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the ABLE Act, we are reminded that millions of Americans with disabilities remain unable to enroll in ABLE programs because of an age restriction in the law. We must continue, and even accelerate, the ABLE Act's progress over the next five years by passing the ABLE Age Adjustment Act, which would raise that age cap.

In the midst of one of the most politically contentious times in recent American history, the passage of the ABLE Age Adjustment Act is commonsense, and the Senate Special Committee on Aging should act to advance with bipartisan support. The bill would expand the pool of eligible individuals to improve their financial lives, including over one million veterans with disabilities.

Prior to the ABLE Act's passage in December 2014, Americans with disabilities risked losing their federal Supplemental Security Income benefits anytime they saved over \$2,000 in their own name. Under these circumstances, Stephen Beck, Jr., set out to find a way for his daughter, who has Down syndrome, to save for the additional expenses that come with living with a disability including her future medical expenses, specialized education, and ongoing supports. Beck's subsequent plan became the basis of the ABLE Act, which created tax-advantaged savings accounts for people with disabilities and their families that do not jeopardize eligibility for federal and state disability benefits.

Five years later, ABLE accounts are used by beneficiaries and offered by 42 states and the District of Columbia. There are 45,928 open ABLE accounts with assets of \$259.8 million and an average account balance of \$5,656, all of which illustrate the importance of these programs for those who can access them under the current law.

These numbers, nonetheless, could be much larger. The 45,928 accounts reflect only a small percentage of Americans with disabilities. However, many Americans – most notably, veterans – acquire or develop a disability after the age of 26 and therefore cannot save with the same benefits and protections as those who have ABLE accounts. Based on the current legislation, those Americans who develop disabilities later in life are unable to participate in the program and left at a greater disadvantage.

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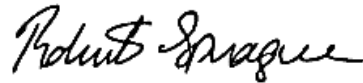
On Tuesday, November 19, Senators Bob Casey (D-Pa.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), and Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) will host a reception officially celebrating five years of ABLE. This milestone is, of course, worthy of celebration, but we must also join him in going one step further – by advocating to expand the ABLE Act. Senators Bob Casey (D-Pa.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), and Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) introduced S. 651/H.R. 1814, the [ABLE Age Adjustment Act](#) to accomplish this very task. Their proposed legislation would raise the ABLE Act’s age restriction from 26 to 46 years of age, allowing many more Americans with disabilities, including over one million veterans, and their families to open ABLE accounts, finally empowering them to save for their future.

For most people, feeling worried about having too much, rather than too little, in a savings account seems unimaginable. But for too many Americans with disabilities and their families, this dilemma is an ongoing reality.

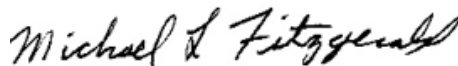
While we celebrate five years of this important and essential program, we must also work to ensure greater access to ABLE accounts by more Americans with disabilities and urge you to swiftly act to pass into law S. 651/ H.R. 1814, the ABLE Age Adjustment Act.



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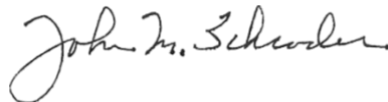
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