



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of  
Health and Social Services**

Senior and Disabilities Services  
Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special  
Education  
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RE: HB188 and SB104 Letter of Support

To Whom It May Concern:

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (the "Council") fills a variety of federal and state roles, including serving as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD) under the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. As the state DD Council, the Council works with Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) and other state agencies to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families receive the services and supports that they need, as well as participate in the planning and design of those services. One of the duties of the state DD Council is providing comments on bills that may have an impact on individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and their families.

To this end, the Council would like to issue this letter of support for HB188 and SB104 as the Alaska enabling legislation for the federal Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act. This legislation and subsequent availability of Alaskan financial institutions to issue tax advantage savings accounts for eligible persons with a disability has the potential to significantly impact a large number of Alaskans, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

Such accounts will allow for much needed savings for qualified disability related expenses not covered by public programs. ABLE Act accounts also stand to work towards eliminating current barriers to employment for Alaskans with disabilities by creating a tool which will allow savings of income earned from a job without jeopardizing the public benefits required to meet their support needs to keep the job. Currently, Alaskan's with disabilities cannot go beyond \$2,000 of resources before losing some or all of their needed public benefits. These accounts have a great potential for assisting individuals with disabilities in a pathway out of poverty and foster greater independence and self-sufficiency.

Alaska works best when everyone has a true opportunity to work, save, and still have necessary supports to meet their unique needs. The Council sees HB188 and SB104 as strongly aligned with the

goals of Alaska's Employment First Law and supports these bills as a means of increasing the independence of Alaskans with disabilities. Ultimately, enabling Alaskans with disabilities to save and provide for their own needs as well as becoming employed has the distinct potential towards significant cost savings for the state.

Respectfully,



Amy Simpson, Chair



Patrick Reinhart, Executive Director