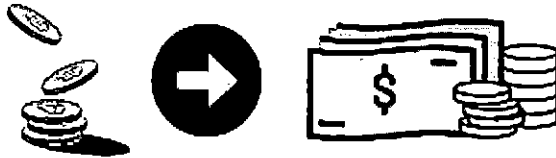


Too many Coloradans with severe disabilities are in crisis because their sole source of income is the monthly benefit provided by Colorado's Aid to the Needy Disabled (AND) program.

3.6 million investment

House Bill 1223 will invest in transitioning AND recipients to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) - federal disability programs that provide over three times the income support.

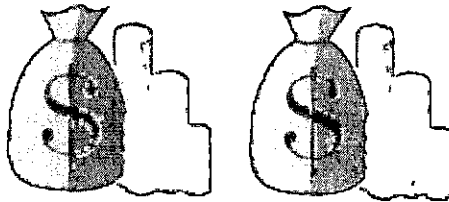
2,510 Coloradans transitioned to SSI or SSDI



AND clients have just \$217 per month in income.

After transitioning to SSI that amount increases to \$771 per month. The average SSDI amount is even higher.

\$3.3 million saved on Colorado's AND program



Application assistance reduces the amount of time people are on AND by half.

Helping 2,510 people transition to SSI in half the time would reduce spending on AND by \$3.3 million.

\$1 million reimbursed to Colorado



Colorado is reimbursed for payments made to AND clients that get approved for SSI.

If the state recoups just 4 months of payments for just half of the population served, the reimbursement would amount to approximately \$1 million.

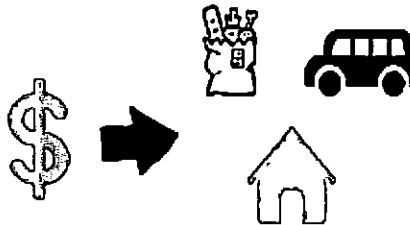
\$1.9 million per month in federal income support for Coloradans with disabilities

Transitioning 2,510 people to SSI would bring \$1.9 million per month in federal disability income into the state.

That amount would continue to grow as people continue to receive income each month.

SSI recipients use their income to pay for food, housing, transportation, and other basic needs. This provides a boost to our economies.

over \$6.2 million return



Moreover, the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless estimates that taxpayers spend up to \$43,240 for each of the highest-needs homeless individuals in Colorado each year. Ensuring a steady income for Coloradans with disabilities helps reduce homelessness, which saves taxpayer money.



CHRONIC CARE COLLABORATIVE

Alzheimer's Association, Colorado Chapter

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Council of the Blind of Colorado

American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association

American Liver Foundation, Rocky Mountain Division

American Lung Association of Colorado

Arthritis Foundation Rocky Mountain Chapter

Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado

Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved

Colorado Gerontological Society

Colorado Health Network

Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance

Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of America, Rocky Mountain Chapter

easterseals Colorado

National Eczema Association

Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado

Huntington's Disease Society of America, Rocky Mountain Chapter

Komen Colorado

Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Rocky Mountain Chapter

Liver Health Connection

Lupus Foundation of Colorado

Mental Health America of Colorado

Muscular Dystrophy Association

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Colorado

National Hemophilia Foundation, Colorado Chapter

National Kidney Foundation of Colorado, Montana and Wyoming

National MS Society, Colorado-Wyoming Chapter

National Stroke Association

Parkinson Association of the Rockies

Rocky Mountain MS Center

Rocky Mountain Stroke Center

Scleroderma Foundation

THRIVE: The Persons Living with HIV/AIDS Initiative of Colorado

March 18, 2019

Dear Legislators:

The Chronic Care Collaborative (CCC) asks for your support on HB19-1223, Social Security Disability Application Assistance. A state general fund investment is essential to ensure that Coloradans with disabilities are able to navigate the complex SSI/SSDI application process and access the income support that they need to thrive.

The CCC previously participated in an effort to establish a statewide Disability Benefit Support Program (DBS). That program was funded through a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation, and sought to sustain its operations through an enterprise fund supported by the auction of vanity license plates. While the idea was creative, the effort was insufficient to sustain the application assistance program needed to meet Coloradans' needs.

Thus, in 2017 DBS was integrated into easterseals Colorado, an organization that continues to provide SSI/SSDI application assistance. easterseals' and other nonprofits currently provide valuable application assistance, but community-based resources remain insufficient to meet the needs of Coloradans living with chronic disease and disability across the state.

As you have heard from other proponents of this bill, funding SSI/SSDI application assistance is a good investment for Colorado. This program will save state resources on programs like Aid to Needy Disabled and other assistance programs to low-income Coloradans, and will help keep vulnerable Coloradans out of poverty.

Please vote yes on House Bill 19-1223.

Allie Moore
Director

Sharon O'Hara
Advisor



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SUPPORT HB 19-1223

The Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition is the largest statewide disability-led organization in the state. Our mission is to advocate for social justice for people with all types of disabilities (cross-disability). We have over 3000 members. We are strongly in support of HB 19-1223 to provide application assistance for people who are on Aid to the Needy Disabled (AND) to assist them to receive SSI or SSDI.

You have materials (or will receive materials) explaining what these benefits are and CCDC is happy to meet with anyone to provide more detailed explanation and how acquisition of these benefits works in real life. First of all, living on SSI or SSDI is not easy. Most people delay application and try to work past the time when it is reasonable or practical. The definition of disability is the inability to engage in substantial gainful employment. This means one cannot earn more than about \$1000 a month for about 9 months and has been found unable to do any job in the national economy. Many of the people that struggle to obtain approval of disability have cognitive or psychiatric disabilities and have impairment of executive function such as organization. Asking someone with these impairments to go through this process that requires numerous steps and high level of attention to detail that is required to get approval is akin to telling someone that uses a wheelchair to walk up a flight of stairs, and then benefits will be provided.

CCDC has been involved in efforts to obtain application assistance for two decades. We have on occasions provided this assistance but were unable to maintain this because it is so time consuming. A complete application process takes at least 40 hours..sometimes more because to do this properly one must accompany clients to doctor appointments, help clients get medical evidence, do multiple detailed interviews of the client, and sometimes must assist the client with activities such as obtaining a state identification card. Because of the complexity if one does not do Social Security work regularly it is hard to do it sporadically because one must keep up with legal changes, new court decisions, new regulations, and even revised forms. This makes it impossible for smaller nonprofits like CCDC to provide meaningful assistance to those in need. Therefore we have been advocating for more than a decade for a program that would provide adequate funding for some other qualified organization to provide this most important service. Efforts to create an application assistance program actually date back to 1992.

The need is clear and every year that this does not happen, hundreds if not thousands of people with significant disabilities suffer needlessly with no one stepping up to provide the

NOTHING ABOUT us, WITHOUT us...EVER!

help they desperately need. We can all point fingers about whose job it is to help, or bemoan the fact that this federal program has regulations that are like quicksand. All of the criticisms are real but leveling the attacks do not get those suffocated by poverty with no lifeline the help they need to just survive.

CCDC has been a strong advocate of work incentive programs like the Medicaid Buy-In Program for Working Adults with Disabilities. We believe that when someone has the capability for work, one should work if they are working age adults. However, the reality is that some people cannot engage in paid employment until they are able to get a semblance of stability in their lives. Because of the way our system works, most disability support programs require that one be receiving SSI or SSDI in order to qualify. Sometimes people with a new or exacerbated disability need to be on benefits for a few months or even a few years to create the stability needed in order to obtain treatment for their health conditions, engage in retraining, or otherwise stabilize their lives so that they can focus on employment. People are much more likely to succeed in employment if they can take advantage of some of the support programs that assist those with disabilities to get and keep jobs. SSI and SSDI are the lifelines for people with disabilities to stabilize. When someone is drowning the lifeline is necessary—and the boat, plane or any other rescue strategy will not work without that lifeline.

HB 19-1223 will provide that lifeline to Colorado residents with disabilities that have no other support and whose disabilities make going through the SSA process alone impossible. HB 19-1223 is good public policy. Please support this bill.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julie Reiskin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julie Reiskin

Executive Director

NOTHING ABOUT us, WITHOUT us...EVER!



House Bill 1223: Help Coloradans with Disabilities Access Federal Disability Support

Sponsored by Rep. Dafna Michaelson-Jenet, Rep. Colin Larson, and Senator Faith Winter

Fund SSI and SSDI Application Assistance for Aid to the Needy Disabled Clients

The bill would create a statewide program that helps individuals with severe disabilities navigate the process of applying for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The program will be administered by the Colorado Department of Human Services and implemented by participating counties. The bill would target Coloradans with the greatest need by making SSI/SSDI application assistance available to Aid to the Needy Disabled (AND) applicants and recipients.

The Need for a Bill

SSI and SSDI help individuals with disabilities achieve stability by providing income for necessities and enabling access to health care. AND is a state program that provides \$217 per month to individuals with severe disabilities while they are applying for SSI/SSDI. With just \$217 per month in income, AND clients struggle to meet their most basic needs and are often homeless.

Completing the application process for SSI/SSDI is extremely difficult. The application is complex and applicants must navigate the process while contending with debilitating mental and/or physical health conditions. As a result, individuals that are ultimately eligible are often denied multiple times. In 2016, more than 10,000 people died while waiting to get approved for SSI. Application assistance greatly improves the rate of approval on initial applications and reduces the time it takes for individuals to access federal support.

The timely access to SSI/SSDI supported by application assistance is critical because –

- **SSI and SSDI help people with disabilities avoid homelessness.** Disability causes and prolongs homelessness. Nearly 10 % percent of the non-institutionalized population in Colorado is disabled, yet Coloradans with disabilities constitute over half of those who are chronically homeless. SSI and SSDI recipients often use the federal assistance to cover housing costs. Housing alleviates the extraordinary health risks associated with homelessness, expedites recovery, and improves peoples' quality of life.
- **SSI and SSDI help people with disabilities access basic needs.** SSI and SSDI ensure a source of income for people with disabilities. Beneficiaries use the financial assistance to pay for food, transportation and other basic needs. In addition, recipients of SSI or SSDI gain access to health care through Medicaid or Medicare.
- **SSI and SSDI improve stability for veterans and their families.** Many veterans suffer from physical and/or mental disabilities as a result of serving in the military. As a result, veterans are more likely to have trouble maintaining employment and stable housing. SSI helps veterans remain housed and meet their most basic needs.
- **SSI and SSDI save the State money and help local economies.** SSI and SSDI reduce the need for people with disabilities to use costly services, such as emergency rooms and homeless services. The support also reduces state spending on programs like Old Age Pension and Aid to the Needy Disabled. In addition, recipients spend the federal support in their communities, boosting local economies.

For more information:

Allison Neswood, Esq. 303-573-5669 ex. 304 or aneswood@cclponline.org

Support for Expanding Social Security Disability Application Assistance

AdvocacyDenver

All Families Deserve a Chance (AFDC) Coalition

Alzheimer's Association, Colorado Chapter

AOI Homecare

Association of Colorado Centers for Independent Living

Atlantis Community

Bayaud

Easter Seals Colorado

Epilepsy Foundation of Colorado

Center for Independence, Grand Junction

Chronic Care Collaborative

Colorado Center on Law and Policy

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless

Colorado Counties, Inc.

Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition

Colorado Mental Wellness Network

Counties and Commissioners Acting Together

CREEC

Denver Health

Disabled Resource Services

Disability Law Colorado

Hunger Free Colorado

Interfaith Alliance

Jefferson County

MS Colorado

NAMI Colorado

NAMI Denver

Oral Health Colorado

PASCO

Southwest Center for Independence

The Arc Arapahoe & Douglas Counties

The Arc of Adams County

The Arc of Aurora

The Arc of Colorado

The Arc of Larimer County

The Arc of Pikes Peak

The Colorado Catholic Conference

The Center Toward Self Reliance in Pueblo

The Independence Center, Colorado Springs

Scleroderma Foundation Rocky Mountain Chapter

Senior Support Services