



WASHINGTON LOW INCOME
Housing Alliance



Washington Housing Alliance
ACTION FUND

End the unfair requirement to pay back funds received from the Aged, Blind and Disabled cash assistance program

The problem:

The Aged, Blind and Disabled program is intended to be a bridge for people applying for federal Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Income (SSI/SSDI) benefits. Current law requires that people pay back every dollar they received from ABD when they transfer to SSI or SSDI.

When they qualify for federal social security benefits, ABD recipients also lose their Housing & Essential Needs rental assistance. SSI payments in 2023 max out at \$914 for an individual which is not nearly enough to afford Washington's sky-high rents. Based on the average length of stay on ABD this means that extremely low-income people with disabilities are required to pay back an average of \$4,545 to the state, an enormous burden.

Legislative solution:

HB 1260/Alvarado: This bill eliminates the requirement to pay the state back.

HB 1260 eliminate a decades old rule from the Reagan era. If passed, low income, disabled people will be able to keep their SSI/SSDI back payments and move forward with more security. These bills are key to preventing homelessness for people with disabilities who otherwise face this unfair and destabilizing benefits cliff.

Why it matters:

An attorney from Spokane offered his example of the impact of the current repayment requirements, offered in testimony earlier this session:

“One of our client’s experiences with ABD exemplifies the current issues with the program. She was fresh out of the hospital when she was finally awarded supplemental security income, and she called in to the firm to get an explanation of why her award letter said she would receive such a small back payment. She had overdue bills to pay and had been counting on the full back payment because she had been fighting for SSI for years. I had to explain that due to this old rule that dates back decades, that the state will automatically get the first cut of her back pay. They took a large portion of it. And this woman was disabled, elderly, and extremely low income. Her story is not an anomaly.”