



The Arc of Pennsylvania Applauds PA ABLE Becoming Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 19, 2016

CONTACT: Maureen Cronin, Executive
Director 717-234-2621

Harrisburg, PA: The Arc of Pennsylvania applauds Governor Wolf for signing SB 879, PA ABLE, into law as Act 17 of 2016. Act 17 allows the Pennsylvania Treasury Department to create and offer ABLE savings accounts in Pennsylvania. The Arc of Pennsylvania particularly recognizes Senator Lisa Baker who introduced and championed SB 879 and the hundreds of advocates who supported passage of PA ABLE.

Before the federal ABLE Act passed in December 2014, asset rules prevented people with disabilities from saving more than \$2,000 - if they did, vital benefits like Medicaid would be cancelled. These rules created a system that disincentivized working and economic self-sufficiency. People with disabilities could not save for important items that would increase their financial independence and employability, such as transportation, assistive technology, and housing, without losing the supports needed to maintain their employment and community living. Each state had to decide whether to offer ABLE accounts; Pennsylvania joins thirty-four other states and the District of Columbia in creating an ABLE account program.

PA ABLE savings accounts allow people with disabilities to save up to \$14,000 annually and use these funds for a wide range of community living expenses, including housing, assistive technology, education, and transportation. Qualified withdrawals from ABLE accounts will be exempt from federal and state income tax. People with ABLE accounts will be able to save money and still be eligible for Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid and other means-tested federal programs.

Ashlinn Masland-Sarani, Policy Director for The Arc of Pennsylvania and Susan Tachau, Chief Executive Officer of the Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation, facilitated the statewide ABLE Advocacy Coalition comprised of individuals with disabilities, their family members, and representatives from over 30 disability organizations.

"PA ABLE will allow hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities across Pennsylvania to have control and choice over their own money for the first time. ABLE accounts are a great option for Pennsylvanians with disabilities and their families of all income levels to use for assistive technology, housing and other community living expenses," said Susan Tachau.

Federal law allows states to take any funds left in an ABLE account to pay back Medicaid after an individual with a disability passes away. Pennsylvania's ABLE program is unique in the country - the state has chosen not to enforce the payback, giving a great benefit for Pennsylvanians with disabilities and their families.

Ashlinn Masland-Sarani shared, "We are incredibly proud to be part of the cross-disability work that helped the federal ABLE bill pass and supported PA ABLE becoming law. ABLE accounts are a significant step in improving our community system towards one that encourages employment and meaningful lives in the community for Pennsylvanians with disabilities."

###

Editor's Note: The Arc is not an acronym; always refer to us as The Arc, not The ARC and never ARC. The Arc should be considered as a title or a phrase.

The Arc of Pennsylvania
www.thearcpa.org