

# MARK B. SIMON

Attachment B

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April 29, 2014

Members of the House Public Health Care and Human Services Committee

Re; SB 14-014 PTC Rebates,

I wish to state my SUPPORT for SB 14-014.

The property/heat tax rebates are very important to people with disabilities.

Many elderly and 75% of people with disabilities live at or below the federal poverty level (\$11,490/yr).

The current Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefit, the primary income program for low-income persons with disabilities, is;

- \$721 per month for an individual, \$1,082 for a couple, or \$8,685 per year for an individual, \$12,984 couple, with an average payment of \$541.34 per month.
- Federal Poverty level is \$11,670 per year for an individual, \$15,730 couple.
- There are currently 70,743 persons with disabilities receiving SSI, and an estimated 50,000 who are eligible but unable to navigate the application process, which we are trying to address through the Application Assistance Program authorized by the legislature in 2011.
- For the lowest income recipients, the rebate can equal or exceed a month's income for them and make a significant positive impact in their lives.

This has had greater impact on people with disabilities, as while we have property tax exemptions for elderly and veterans, they are not available for people with disabilities, many of whom live on lower incomes than their elderly and veteran counterparts. Unfortunately, as property taxes rise, we are seeing the pricing-out effect on their continued home-ownership, and while of course maintaining your home must come first, any relief we can provide may assist in continued independence and reducing the burden on other programs. One should not have to choose between a place to live and other needs.

Lastly, of great import to me, this also addresses a long-standing problem for people with disabilities who are beneficiaries of a special needs trust, as under IRS rules the income received by the trust must be reported on the beneficiaries tax return, even if they do not get anything from the trust.

Your support for this worthy endeavor and the amendment is greatly appreciate and will help those citizens affected to maintain an increased level of independence, dignity, and quality of life.

Cordially,

