



CALIFORNIA STATE TREASURER JOHN CHIANG

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Treasurer Chiang, Treasurer-Elect Ma, and Assemblymember Irwin Launch Major Program That Financially Empowers Those with Disabilities to Save for the Future

CalABLE Frees Individuals to Deposit More and Save Money So They Can Afford the Costs of Living with a Disability

Los Angeles, CA – At an event in Los Angeles, California State Treasurer John Chiang, Treasurer-elect and Board of Equalization Member Fiona Ma, State Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (CA-44), and representatives of different stakeholder and disability advocacy groups today launched CalABLE — California’s new, innovative Achieving a Better Life Experience program, which will allow individuals with disabilities to open tax-advantaged savings and investment accounts and contribute significantly more than the \$2,000 they are currently allowed to save under rules for many government programs.



Treasurer Chiang, Treasurer-elect Ma, Assemblymember Irwin, and members from different disability advocacy groups announce the launch of CalABLE this morning at the Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

“Today, as we band together in a season in which so many celebrate life and our highest ideals, we are announcing the long overdue steps California is taking to help individuals with disabilities achieve a better life experience,” Treasurer Chiang said at the launch event at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. “CalABLE will empower people with disabilities to create their own safety net and build wealth because living with a disability should not equate to living life on the brink of poverty. As Californians, we care about our fellow human beings, and CalABLE is a statement of those values.”

Before CalABLE, individuals could be penalized if they maintained more than \$2,000 in a bank account, but CalABLE will end decades of unfair restraints on how much money individuals with disabilities can deposit and save into a savings account. Beginning today, after opening an account, eligible individuals for CalABLE will be able to contribute \$15,000 a year — up to a maximum of \$529,000 into an ABLER account, while still maintaining such benefits as Medi-Cal and CalFresh. Those who wish to remain eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) can contribute the annual \$15,000, up to \$100,000, into an ABLER account without the funds counting as assets.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, almost seven percent of California’s population, under the age of 65, have some sort of disability, suggesting that hundreds of thousands of Californians with disabilities are caught in a bureaucratic Catch 22, in which the financial support they receive from public programs essentially precludes them from building significant savings.

“CalABLE is a program rooted in social equity and financial equality, and will finally help create a level playing field for Californians with disabilities,” said Treasurer-elect Ma. “I want to thank Treasurer Chiang for his leadership in getting this deeply-needed program off the ground, and I look forward to taking up the mantle and working with everyone in this community to ensure CalABLE continues to be a success.”

State Assemblymember Irwin, who authored the original ABLER legislation, added, “Four years ago, I was approached by advocates in the disability community about the need for legislation that would help hundreds of thousands of disabled Californians and their families save money. The launch of the CalABLE program is a great achievement that will give people with disabilities a path to greater independence and dignity. I’m incredibly grateful to Treasurer John Chiang for helping to implement this crucial legislation.”

While CalABLE mirrors the important aspects of the federal ABLER Act, the state legislature made significant improvements to make the program different than ABLER programs offered in other states. Last year, the legislature passed a bill that limits the state’s ability to seek repayment from a CalABLE account after an account holder’s death, for medical care expenses paid during the time they had the account. Additionally, the legislature passed a law that protects CalABLE accounts from money judgments. These consumer protections have made CalABLE an even stronger program for Californians with disabilities.

“Despite progress in other areas, substantial barriers to economic self-sufficiency persist for people with disabilities nearly three decades after the Americans with Disabilities Act became

the law,” said Katherine Perez, Executive Director of The Coelho Center for Disability Law, Policy, and Innovation. “Full access to the American dream cannot be realized while a third of disabled people still live below the poverty line. To matter, the means to make informed financial decisions must be met with robust financial education and coaching. Financial services and products must be affordable as well as accessible, and the ability to save money and build assets must be more than an idea. CalABLE promises to be a necessary link in bridging the gap between the current economic realities that many people with disabilities face and a better future brought about, in part, by what happens when personal planning is assisted by sensible public policy.”

In order to qualify for a CalABLE account, a person must have a disability onset before the age of 26. They must also either be eligible to receive benefits such as SSI or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), or have a disability certification that includes a diagnosis by a physician. Generally, those with physical mobility issues, blindness, hearing impairment, some mental health diagnoses, and more are eligible.

“CalABLE has the potential to be the strongest program of its kind,” said Pine Mountain Club resident Kelly Kulzer-Reyes, the mother of Amelia Reyes, a young girl with Down syndrome, one of CalABLE’s first official enrollees. “My husband and I are thrilled to have our daughter’s savings and path to her future here in California.”

CalABLE account owners can select how to invest their money and easily schedule deposits and withdrawals right from the new website that launched today — www.CalABLE.ca.gov. A CalABLE account can also be managed by a parent, legal guardian, conservator, or Power of Attorney, in the event an account owner is unable to manage their own account. Withdrawals are exempt from federal and state income tax, so long as the earnings are used for qualified expenses related to a disability.

Treasurer Chiang concluded, “I have no doubt that CalABLE will not only go down as one of the best programs I have ever been a part of through my two decades in public office, but promises to offer the most significant advancement in the quality of life for people with disabilities since the passage of the American with Disabilities Act.”

To watch a video of today’s events, [click here](#).

About CalABLE

To open a CalABLE account, visit www.CalABLE.ca.gov. To learn more information about the program, visit www.treasurer.ca.gov/able.

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