

# A Federal Policy Framework to Improve the Financial Well-being of People with Disabilities

## Executive Summary

People with disabilities face numerous financial challenges due to systemic barriers that limit access to education, employment, financial services, and economic security programs. This policy paper proposes a national framework aimed at improving the financial well-being of people with disabilities by addressing structural issues and enhancing access to financial resources and support. The paper outlines key recommendations for inclusive education, employment opportunities, accessibility in financial services, and strengthened social safety nets.

## Problem Statement

People with disabilities are more likely to experience poverty than those without disabilities due to barriers in accessing quality education, gainful employment, and comprehensive support systems. These challenges are exacerbated by outdated policies that limit income and asset accumulation, making it difficult for people with disabilities to achieve financial independence.

## Goals of the Policy

1. **Increase economic opportunities** for people with disabilities by promoting inclusive education and accessible vocational training.
2. **Promote fair employment practices** to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to gainful employment opportunities.
3. **Improve access to financial services** by enhancing the accessibility of banking, credit, and investment services.
4. **Strengthen social safety nets** to ensure financial security for individuals with disabilities, regardless of employment status.

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## I. Inclusive Education and Training

1. **Expand Access to Inclusive Education**
  - **Goal:** Ensure that all students with disabilities receive the necessary supports to participate in mainstream education and vocational programs.
  - **Action Items:**
    - Increase federal funding for schools to provide assistive technology, special education services, and training for educators on disability inclusion.
    - Promote the development of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that focus on career readiness, skills development, and transition planning for students with disabilities.



- Mandate higher education institutions to adopt universal design principles in course delivery and facilities.

## 2. Accessible Vocational Training Programs

- **Goal:** Create pathways to employment for individuals with disabilities through vocational training and skill-building programs.
- **Action Items:**
  - Allocate federal grants to establish vocational training centers that offer programs specifically tailored to people with disabilities.
  - Incentivize employers to collaborate with vocational programs in offering apprenticeships, internships, and on-the-job training.
  - Develop career mentorship initiatives to connect young people with disabilities to industry professionals.

## II. Fair Employment Practices

### 1. Strengthen Employment Non-Discrimination Laws

- **Goal:** Enforce and expand laws that protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination in hiring, promotion, and workplace accommodations.
- **Action Items:**
  - Increase funding for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to actively monitor compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and prosecute violations.
  - Extend federal tax credits for businesses that hire and accommodate workers with disabilities, such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit.
  - Create a federal program that funds workplace accessibility audits to help employers identify and remove physical, technological, and procedural barriers.

### 2. Promote Remote and Flexible Work Opportunities

- **Goal:** Increase job access for people with disabilities through remote and flexible work arrangements.
- **Action Items:**
  - Establish federal guidelines to support telework and flexible scheduling for people with disabilities.
  - Provide grants to companies that develop accessible remote working technologies and platforms.
  - Implement a public awareness campaign to encourage employers to adopt flexible work policies that accommodate diverse abilities.



### III. Accessible Financial Services

#### 1. Enhance the Accessibility of Banking and Credit Services

- **Goal:** Ensure that financial institutions provide products and services that are accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Action Items:**
  - Require banks and credit unions to make their physical branches and digital platforms accessible to individuals with visual, hearing, or mobility impairments.
  - Mandate that credit reporting agencies offer alternative formats (e.g., large print, Braille, audio) for credit reports and provide accessible dispute resolution processes.
  - Incentivize financial technology companies to develop accessible digital financial tools, such as budgeting apps and investment platforms.

#### 2. Expand Financial Education Programs

- **Goal:** Provide targeted financial literacy programs that address the unique needs of people with disabilities.
- **Action Items:**
  - Fund community-based organizations to deliver financial education workshops tailored to people with disabilities, covering topics like budgeting, saving, and credit management.
  - Partner with disability advocacy groups to create accessible financial education materials.
  - Launch a federal financial literacy initiative aimed at empowering people with disabilities to make informed financial decisions.

### IV. Strengthened Social Safety Nets

#### 1. Modernize Social Security and Disability Benefits

- **Goal:** Reform Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) to better support people with disabilities without penalizing them for working.
- **Action Items:**
  - Increase the asset limit for SSI eligibility to allow individuals to save for future expenses without losing benefits.
  - Establish an earnings disregard policy that permits people with disabilities to earn above the Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level without losing benefits.
  - Streamline the benefits application and appeals process to reduce delays and improve accessibility for applicants.



## 2. Expand Access to Affordable Housing

- **Goal:** Provide more housing options that are affordable and accessible to people with disabilities.
- **Action Items:**
  - Increase funding for the Section 811 Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities program.
  - Offer tax incentives to developers who build or renovate housing to meet accessibility standards.
  - Develop a national registry of accessible housing units to help people with disabilities find appropriate housing options.

## 3. Improve Access to Health Care and Personal Assistance Services

- **Goal:** Ensure that people with disabilities have access to necessary health services and supports.
- **Action Items:**
  - Expand Medicaid coverage for home and community-based services (HCBS) to reduce waitlists and promote independent living.
  - Mandate that private insurers provide accessible health information and accommodate individuals with communication disabilities.
  - Increase funding for programs that train and certify personal care assistants to meet the growing demand for in-home care.

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### Implementation Strategy

1. **Establish a Federal Task Force on Disability Financial Inclusion:** This task force will coordinate the efforts of federal agencies, state governments, disability advocacy organizations, and the private sector to implement the recommendations.
2. **Provide Funding through Federal Grants and Incentives:** Allocate federal grants to states and localities for pilot programs and innovative projects that align with the policy's goals.
3. **Monitor and Evaluate Progress:** Implement a data-driven approach to monitor the progress of the policy initiatives, with annual reports submitted to Congress outlining achievements and areas needing improvement.



## Conclusion

Adopting this federal policy framework would address key barriers that people with disabilities face, leading to improved financial well-being and economic independence. By fostering inclusive education, fair employment practices, accessible financial services, and stronger social safety nets, the policy will create a more equitable society that empowers people with disabilities to thrive.

