Tuesday

10-19-2021

SignNexus

ID#18482 -- ABLE National Resource

1:30-3:30 PM EST

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[Captioner standing by]

>>> Hello, everyone and thank you for joining us here today. We're here with the able national resource center and today we're doing a panel. We're going to be talking about employment and able accounts and how ABLE accounts support employment and we'll be presenting information and sharing that with you as well as the key feature of what we're doing today in our 90 minutes today. It's a panel with working ABLE account owners. We want to welcome you. We're glad you're here. We also want to thank our funder. The ABLE national resource center is funded for a grant through Prudential. So I'm going to hand it over to my colleague Hope Price to share some logistics to get us all on the same page so that we have a really good experience with the webinar and panel today. Hope.

>> Thank you, Miranda. So if you're listening to today's meeting, it can be accessed using your computer audio selection in zoom or by calling in by phone. If you select computer audio, please make sure your speakers were turned on or your head phones were plugged in. Please dial 1 929 205 6099 and enter meeting code 818 7147 2539. For captions and ASL interpretation, real time captioning is provided. The captions can be found by clicking on the closed captions icon in your zoom controls in the bottom of your screen. American sign language interpretation is also provided. If you don't see the captions after clicking the button or the ASL interpreters on the screen, please alert the host via the chat box. If you miss portions of this webinar it's being recorded and the materials will be placed on the national resource center website along with all of our other ABLE webinars at ablenrc.org/resources/webinars.

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>> My name is Miranda Kennedy and I'll be sharing information about ABLE as well as facilitating our panel today. So let me share just in case folks are new to perhaps this is one of the first webinars you have joined with the ABLE national resource center. We want to let you know who we are. What it is that we do. The ABLE national resource center, our acronym is ABLE, NRC. We are the leading comprehensive source of objective and independent information about federal and state related ABLE programs and activities including guidance on tax advantaged ABLE savings accounts. We don't oversee or manage any of the 45 state ABLE programs plus D.C., however we do share education and outreach, best practices, strategies and information and so forth. We estimate to be about 8 million people currently. We have done pioneering work in this area and we have done a great number of subject matter expertise we have grown in over the years. Especially with our ABLE account numbers and family members that serve as advisers and ambassadors for us and share their services and experiences with us. We have become the foremost authority on topics related to the achieving a better life experience, also known as ABLE, act. ABLE accounts, ABLE programs, ABLE related policy developments and comprehensive integration of ABLE and financial capability strategies for people with disabilities into public service delivery systems. I'll share our website growing and evolving all the time. We do hope that you're checking it out and accessing it as a resource. That's what it's there for. Our website is ablenrc.org and we're the most visited site on ABLE accounts. So do check that out. A lot is going to be information on that website. So I'll share what we're covering in our agenda and then first of all, I wanted to share with you our panelists who are going to be here with us and you'll be hearing more from these folks. I'm not going to do a deep intro right now but I wanted to share your pictures and tell you a little bit about the six people that we'll be hearing from today. We're going to be hearing from Taylor Carty who is in her 20s. She's a California resident. She's a research assistant applying for medical school. She is a Pennsylvania ABLE account owner. And we have been working together since 2019, she has been one of our ABLE ambassadors. We also have Chris Peterson that lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is a software developer as well as a financial podcaster and we have done great work together in the podcast area and penny forward focuses on financial education and sharing information with people who are blind and he is an attainable savings plan account owner. We also have with us Katy Oliver who is a resident of the state of Texas. She is a STABLE account owner as well as being a software developer. Katy has been working with us as an ambassador since 2018 and her story and her goals with her able account have evolved over the years and she is on the cusp of big things there too. So looking forward to hearing from her and what she will have to share with us and here, it takes two slides to share all of our panelists. On our second slide, we have Nathan turner who was one of the first people to open an ABLE account with Ohio's STABLE program. He lives in Ohio, Toledo and he is a quality rater as well as being a financial educator with the Lucas County developmental disabilities board. So he has a number of hats he's wearing. He will be sharing his experience with his ABLE account. What he is using it for and how he shares that information in his financial education work he does in Lucas county. We also have Simon Cantos who lives in Pennsylvania and has a Pennsylvania able account. He is a mechanical engineer, a senior sales engineer and works full time there. They're new to being able ambassadors. He had his able account for a long time and we'll be hearing different perspectives there. We also have with us my colleague Brian Ingram who lives in Oregon and is the parent of an Oregon ABLE account owner and he is also a disability and employment subject matter expert. Especially from the perspective of being a working individual with an able account and from Brian's perspective, being a parent of a 20 year old on the cusp of moving into the employment and is in education around that right now. We'll be talking about ABLE legislation and financial independence. A little bit of 101 on ABLE accounts. Some of you might be new to ABLE accounts and need that information. Some of you listening in might be able to give those presentations. For those of you who are in that position, it doesn't hurt to reinforce the information or you can go grab a quick cup of coffee and join us back in about ten minutes after going through that information and we're hoping that will take up a good amount of our 90 minutes we'll have today. We have links to great resources there at the end. And with live links it's going to be good information there.

So the U.S. department of labor and the office of disability employment policy celebrate disability employment and we're honoring awareness month and we have done that, our news letter came out last week from ABLE national resource center where we shared podcasts, blogs, spotlights, featuring the five panelists on our live panel with us here today. We encourage you to follow gnash #NDEAM related activities this month. And this year's theme is and appropriately so, America's recovery powered by inclusion. So let's talk about data on working aged people with disabilities. American with disabilities make up 20% of the U.S. population so that's roughly 40 to 57 million people and many people with disabilities as most of you probably know live at or near the poverty level. 1 in 5 families have a family member with a disability and working age adults have disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64. Working age adults with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than those without disabilities. It's the low rates of employment within the population. There's extra costs of living with a disability. According today at a with our parent organization, national disability institute, households that contain an adult with a work disability require on average, 28% more income to obtain the same standard of living as a comparable household without a member with a disability. In practical terms that averages out to an additional $17,750 a year at the median household income and that's according to the extra cost of living with a disability in the U.S. resetting the policy table. And here is our one chart and a powerful one. Employment and ABLE savings can change the cycle of poverty for working with people with disabilities who are black, indigenous, Latinx or white who have higher poverty rates. They have lower network compared to households without disability. So the household without a disability has almost $84,000 in network for a household that does not have a member with a disability. For a household that has a member with a disability, that network is $14,180.

>> That's almost a $70,000 difference. So households black and disabled have the lowest network at $1,282. That's pretty stark. National disability institute publication on the banking status and financial behaviors of adults with disabilities published in 2019 so we're pulling this from recent data and data sources such as the US. Census bureau and the American community survey. All people that have a disability whether they receive a public benefit or not are encouraged to work to their fullest ability. Almost 65% of working age adults receive benefits from at least one public benefit program and some of those benefits are means tested where income and resources determine whether or not a person is eligible or continues to be eligible for the benefit or program. And it does not effect most federally funded means tested benefits. That's why we're talking about ABLE accounts here today. We'll talk about learning strategies and supports and services that we'll discuss to enable tools there. So we'll talk a little bit about able accounts and financial independence. So able legislation passed in December 19th, 2014. It was very Bipartisan and creates a tax advantage savings account for eligibility individuals with disabilities allowing those 8 million people with disabilities to save more than the $2,000 resource limit that hasn't changed since 1989. And this is because congress really recognized that, you know, millions of disabilities receive and rely on benefits and that can really keep folks in or near poverty. So what is an able account?

It's a tax advantage savings account owned by a person with disability with an onset before the age of 26 and they receive supplemental security income or social security disability benefits or where they self certify that they have a written and signed disability certification form from a qualifying physician. And that disability certification form on the screen you see is hyperlinked to our disability certification form that you can access if you need that for your able program. It allows an ABLE account for people with a disability so they can save and invest money and use the funds in that account for qualified disability expenses and those are very broad and will have that in a minute and where they can also maintain eligibility for federally funded public benefits that they require. So savings will not effect supplemental security income benefits. If you exceed $100,000, your SSI check will stop until your account drops below 100,000. A person can have any money and it WONL effect federal student aid, housing assistance through HUD, supplemental nutrition program and food benefits. Their SSDI. Their disability insurance. Their Medicare or any type of benefit including Medicaid waiver services so all of that SSI check might stop at 100,000 or above, those other benefits do not. We think that's important to point out to those of you who were entrusted in employment in your able account. A number of our panelists were above the age of 26 but all of them qualified by having their disability occur before the age of 26. So an able account can be opened at any age. You can be 65 as long as you acquire your disability before age 26 and would be able account can be opened and it's in the order we have on the screen. First it could be the individual with capacity or the individual selected by the eligible individual. Next would be the agent under power of attorney, conservator or legal guardian. A spouse, sibling, or grandparent and finally representative payee at individual or organizational level. How are those opened?

They're opened online for the most part. Although, last week, Maine opened their ABLE program and you can walk into a bank or savings account to open an ABLE account there and there's other states looking at having that through their banks as well. And the average amount of time is 10 minutes although it does take longer which are rich with great information that you'll need to know. To take specific axes on the account to support them. So how much and who can contribute to those able accounts?

Well, you can certainly go above that $2,000 limit. Those funds could be contributed to by friends or family. Special needs or pool trust or 529 college savings rollover into an ABLE account and in addition the ABLE account owner can contribute their earned income, unemployment insurance, stimulus payments, economic recovery payments. I know some of our panelists on today have put those funds into their able accounts. Tax refunds can go into the able accounts and an ABLE account owner that works and does not participate in an employer retirement plan can have up to $12,760 in the contiguous United States. If you live in Alaska or Hawaii, it costs more to live there. So the amounts are higher from those two states. In the 14 and $15,000 range. It allows them to retain eligible for SSI although it's certainly beneficial for people with disabilities who are not on benefits because guess what, having a disability is expensive. So that's important to keep in mind. Also, really big benefit, we talked about this before but Medicaid and other public benefits, ABLE accounts don't count against those as a resource. They won't be impacted. In terms of your eligibility won't be impacted. ABLE investment earnings. If you're investing the funds and those funds are growing, those earnings are not taxable. It's a way to have your money make money for you which something that people without disabilities have had an opportunity to engage in for years and now this is an opportunity for people with disabilities to do the same. And that's not taxable which is really significant. So when we talk about why saving in an ABLE account, the account balance and principle can be invested in a variety of options. There's a wealth of options with over 40 ABLE programs available to folks. Contributions, again, can be into ABLE can come from family, friends, special needs, trusts, rollovers, and they can contribute up to the $15,000 per calendar year. So that's just reinforcing that information.

They do allow savings of up to 235,000 or 529,000. That $100,000 goes away unless you drop back below that but those state ABLE plans, you can accrue, up to $529,000 in a plan. That's really something to be thinking about. The last two slides here, just talk about what are qualified disability expenses. We have webinars and decision guides and great resources on what QDEs are but they're very broad and these are just the categories and under each category there could be lists. IRS does not provide us with a comprehensive list of everything because it would be mamouth. They didn't want to do that. Anything that would improve your quality of life for the person with a disability can also include the quality of life for the family. It just doesn't have to benefit the individual but it definitely has to benefit the individual. So any education expenses. Employment and training support, assistive technology, personal support services, health related expenses including prevention and wellness. Financial management and administrative services. Legal fees. Expenses for oversite as well. Funeral and burial expenses are all categories of things that you can use your ABLE account to pay for. A piece of advice is if you're receiving services or supports or working with a program that provides supports in this area, you might use your ABLE account to augment those. That's the next slide here. This is just a list. If you need job coaching or additional job coaching, your ABLE account can pay for that or for job accommodations, home modifications, assistive technology, tools or uniforms, tuition or books to pay for fees for things. If you need a laptop computer, anything along those lines would be an employment related expense that an able account could cover. I know I'm ready to start talking with our able account owners and family members. So with that, I am going to open it up. I want to talk with Taylor. I'm going to give folks a little introduction to Taylor who I have had the privilege of working with. I'm going to stop sharing my screen. So we can hop on and see Taylor. Let's pin you if we can.

>> Hello.

>> Taylor is coming to us from California today. You are a graduate of the University of California with a bachelor's in Molecular and cell biology. You're currently working with Syracuse university as a research assistant and as someone with Cerebral palsy, you're using your able account to navigate financial challenges as you apply for medical school and as you're working a full time job. So I want to just start off by asking, what else?

There's so much more about you, but is there anything else that you think that our audience should know about you that I didn't include in that brief introduction?

>> I'm actually working part time and other than that I'm currently a research affiliate regarding the progress of cell therapy to treat neurological disorders.

>> The work you're doing is on self determination as well. So you're in this field quite a bit and strattling the whole country with that work. In New York and California. You're a little busy for someone in her mid 20s.

>> I'm busy. But I love my work everywhere. Our study regards how individuals make decisions and how they use their support system in terms of factors such as their ability to choose how they make choices and their happiness in life. And a lot of our participants are eager to work actually and it's interesting to see the process and where they are currently at in their lives.

>> And certainly an ABLE account can support employment and self determination and we're talking about those abilities to make choices and the able account is actually in the name of the person who has a disability. So there's that opportunity to make decisions for yourself.

>> I agree with you.

>> From that perspective, what does national disability employment awareness month mean to you as someone with a disability and that you work in this field and it connects with other people and their employment.

>> So I think just in terms of employment itself, it can give you increased financial security and help you develop new skills and you get a sense of community and I think especially for individuals with disabilities who may not have the exact resources as someone who is able bodied or the average family and just hasn't been able to tap into employment opportunities in the same way. But getting employment itself and you can get the factors such as increased sense of community. Once you do have employment, you can influence the other people that are around you and whatever you want to do and that's really important for everyone.

>> You're certainly embodying that. We have chosen among you and other panelists and people who are influencers or up and coming influencers. I don't know if you consider yourself something. I always consider that having worked with you for the last three years and seeing your arc out of college and into, you know, the working world and, as you have grown in this space and your journey has changed and everyone is going to need to check out your podcast because it's excellent and how are you using it. What are you able to do with your able account that you weren't able to do before you have it?

>> So when I first thought about opening my able account, I had just graduated college and I wanted to apply to med school. It's very expensive. I knew that I needed to start planning and develop a financial plan but due month medical expenses, it just wasn't feasible to lose it and I knew I needed some tool and I was lucky enough not only to be pretty good at research but I also had an amazing work incentives planner who helped me and I opened my ABLE account in November of 2017 and I just began saving for when I got into med school. And now a couple of years later, I not only want to save for med school but I'm planning for other things such as retirement so I want to use my able account for just the things in the future.

>> For someone who is listening, I think, you know, you're in your mid 20s now and when we met you, you were in your early 20s. So thinking about how you're using this here and now as well as your long term future is really significant and how it helps you manage what you need while being able to pursue your employment goals and career dreams is a really significant thing to talk about. I do want to mention this and we'll have more questions for you when we come back around to you at the end but we started working with Taylor in 2019. You identified, preapplication for federal student aid. We didn't previously. There was federal guidance that able accounts shouldn't count against you as a resource, against these types of things, but we didn't have specific guidance from U.S. department of education on that and it's little things that are so significant and it's a huge thing to accomplish.

>> With all of my friends and no matter who I meet that thinks about higher education, if they're going to college or if they're going to grad school or whatever, if you have a disability and you want to start saving and especially if you come from a low income family, it's a great tool because it won't count against you and it can help you apply for scholarships too. So it's amazing.

>> Sharing your story with others, your voice, your experience, your best practices and you have grown in how you're even thinking about using your ABLE account as the years are rolling by, right?

>> Thank you. I'll have a few more questions during the round robin at the end. So stick around. I'll go over to Chris next. So Chris. I'm going to go ahead and spotlight you. And I will unspotlight Taylor. Hi, thanks for joining us today. I'll give a little introduction and then ask you to add anything you might want to add to this. So Chris Peterson, for those of you with us here. He's from Minneapolis, Minnesota and he's a software developer who has happened to learn a great deal about managing his own finances over the year. He decided to make it his mission to teach other blind people some of the things he had to learn the hard way. He began building a community of people who are blind who share his interest in financial independence. We have done podcasts with christ, Chris has done podcasts with us because our missions absolutely align, Chris. In terms in the space and we're really happy. Thank you for joining us here today. I just want to ask, is there anything else you think folks need to know about you that I didn't share in my intro?

>> Oh, there's a ton but just to keep it there, the main point is that people with disabilities have the same wants and needs and aspirations as anybody. In my case, I have a family, I have a wife and two kids and some pets and a house and a mortgage and a car and all the expenses that people take for granted but able accounts can help us to, as you pointed out earlier, have the same kind of standard of living as everyone else which is something we want.

>> I know we have a great podcast we did with you also that you talked more indeposition about this but what does it mean for you in general for yourself and your life as well as for the folks that are listening to penny forward which I believe most of those folks in your audience are generally working.

>> Many of them are and the ones that aren't are actively looking and in some cases kind of struggling to find work. And it provides a real sense of community. It provides a sense of self worth. It helps to raise our standards for our standard of living, our financial security. And whether we do this or not it's a lot of how people see us. I know people getting shutdown by perspective employers and I know how much of a struggle it is but looking at people from the outside. A lot of people see somebody who is not working as lazy or somehow less than somebody who is employed. We want to be viewed as active contributors to society, active members of our communities, our churches, our schools, our work communities, professional communities. Even sports and recreational communities and employment lets us do that as well as keeps our minds active and engaged which we know particularly from studying seniors that can extend your lifespan and even into your later years. Employment is just important on so many levels that I wish it lasts all year.

>> Wouldn't that be wonderful if it did. The focus needs to be maintained all year. But I do think that you're quite the renaissance man too. Software developer. You started this new nonprofit, penny forward. You're in a bowling and dart league and you have kids and a dog and you're quite active, Chris, but I wonder in terms of we have done a few podcasts together at this point. There's one that's 47 minutes long that we did and there's a shorter one we did and it's very informative too but can you talk about what your able account means for you specifically. What have you been able to do with your account that you wouldn't be able to do without it. On our podcast, you talked about previously, in terms of emergency expenses are the kind of things that you could do or could have done in the past if you had it. It exists when you were quite a bit younger. You're closer than my age. We're not Taylor's age. We're in our 40s, Chris and I are. Could I pitch that question to you?

>> Yeah, absolutely. Taylor is incredibly lucky. People that are younger than Taylor are even luckier because ABLE accounts exist. One of my biggest regrets is that ABLE accounts didn't exist when I was Taylor's age or younger. But I am working on starting a nonprofit that provides financial literacy education to people who are blind and deaf blind and that is a lot of work and so far, for me, it's part time work but in order to get it done right it needs to be full time work at some point and I'm working on making that transition and part involves my able account. I'm setting money aside for mine and my family's basic living expenses and also pay for some employment related expenses related to that transition. I hope to leave my job and become the CEO of penny forward full time providing financial literacy education to people blind and deaf blind and penny forward is new. We don't have a lot of money right now. We're working on fund raising until we do have adequate funds to support that mission. I need to pay for that somehow. So I'm expecting to have a couple of years where I have very little or no income and between my ABLE account, we'll be able to make that work.

>> And you have a very fast growing and listening audience to your podcast and we really enjoyed partnering up with you and having you talk about ABLE accounts with your background and experience. He's not an official ambassador but you're kind of an ambassador for us Chris. We adopted you as such which has been great. We appreciated the collaboration and your perspective on this is a key one and you're able to help us extend and reach out to the community and that's great. I have a few questions we'll come back to you with at the end but for now, I'm going to remove your spotlight. I'm going to hop on over to Simon. So Simon, if you could there you are. Hi.

>> Hi.

>> It's nice to see you coming to us from Pennsylvania today, Simon. I'll introduce you a little bit and have you say anything you think we should share about you. We have a spotlight on Simon that went out in our news letter. You're not as old as Chris and I but you're nearly 30s and you're a mechanical engineer. You live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, graduate of Villanova university and senior sales engineer for the carrier air conditioner company since 2013 and you just opened your Pennsylvania ABLE account this year and we separated and said well Simon should be one of our ABLE ambassadors as well. We like to Shea case the experience of those new to it as well as early adopters of ABLE accounts. Your ABLE eligible as a result of having a rare form of congenital muscular dystrophy and you're a leader in that community and also I should mention for everyone, you're quite the car and vehicle officinado. What should people know about you.

>> Not only have I been working as an engineer as my day job but in my spare time I mentor a lot of young adults, kids and their families who are affected by congenital muscular dystrophy. I have been doing that for as long as I have been working. So that's about 15 years. Maybe more.

>> While you work full time and you're going into the office on Monday and currently with the pandemic working from home, you do receive one benefit that supports your ability to work that you maintain also.

>> I'm involved with Medicare assistance for workers with disabilities. It does provide the same Medicare benefits as if I was on SSI. There's a mean limit and asset limit which is why I opened an ABLE account. I was at the point in my career with carrier where I was my income was flirting with that limit for the medical assistance program that I was enrolled in.

>> Yeah, I do want to talk to you too about what does your ABLE account mean to you?

What are you able to do with it that you're not able to do without it?

I know that you're talking to people in the communities that you mentor about that as well.

>> Yeah, for me, it's been a safety net.

It's weird that you can interpret that like I'm being punished for being successful at my job. And anyway you spin it, that doesn't sound right.

>> It doesn't. There's also longer term goals that you have as well as some of the shorter unexpected things have come up for you where it's nice to be able to access your able accounts. I like to have my own that I can call my own and ABLE account has the means to allow me to do that. I also use my ABLE account to deal with some unexpected issues. I recently had an unexpected issue with my vehicle and I had to pay a pretty hefty bill of $1,800 very suddenly on a vehicle that I had just gotten about just over a year ago and it's something that I had to pay out of pocket. I didn't have any other savings or funds except for my able account to pay that bill and pay it in a timely manner. So thankfully, I had the funds in my account to cover that expense and I was able to handle that with, you know in very short order.

>> I know in your spotlight, we talk also about the fact that you, you know, in the future when you need to get a new power chair, there's a component of that that will be covered by, you know, your different services as well as your private employers insurance but also you'll be on the hook for a decent amount and that's another area where you're thinking about using your ABLE account.

>> Absolutely.

>> Cover some excess expenses on adaptive equipment such as my vehicle and also my power chair which I need to of course use in the office whenever I work.

Vocational rehab is also means tested. Because of my income, they checked my income and they run it through their numbers and I know with the last chair I'm currently using, I had to cover $3,200 for my power chair.

>> Yeah.

>> I had to cover out of pocket.

>> So being able to Noah head of time and plan for that and include those funds in your ABLE account, I know that the podcast we did with Chris, he talked about needing to replace a furnace in Minnesota in winter quickly. $4,000. Planning ahead of time to make sure that you have the cushion and meet those needs. You need those things to be able to work. Transportation and housing or your power chair or so forth. Simon, we'll have a few more questions for you during our round robin at the end. I appreciate you hopping on and sharing your story with the folks joining us today. I'll remove your spotlight and next up I'm going to Katy Oliver and it's a nice Segway considering Katy, some of those themes that Simon was just talking about you're living in as well.

>> Yeah.

>> So Katy you're working full time as a member of a research team with PPD global pharmaceutical contract research organization specializing in data management and while we can't share with folks, I will just say that you're working toward things that are helpful during the current situation we are all in with COVID. So thank you for your work in doing that. As I mentioned earlier, everyone we have on this panel is very influential in different ways and you're all really contributing and we're happy to spotlight that. I do want to say too that you're someone working and also similar to Simon on a Medicaid bye in program in the state of Texas and you're using your able account to save for disability related equipment and also hoping in the future to use your able account to support your dream to design and build an HGTV quality accessible home and not to give too much away from your podcast released last week with Brian but that sounds a little bit more imminent than it did when we started working together in 2019 or 2018. We have been working together for awhile and that's been a dream for awhile and you're getting closer to the dream.

>> Fingers crossed. Nothing definite at this point. Things are coming together. I started a new position in my company a few months ago and the ABLE account has actually helped me because it was quite a significant pay increase. I've been able to contribute more to my ABLE account than I was before and also maintain my eligibility for support services. I also want to share with people so they have a real life example that I also have a special needs trust that my husband manages so that's part of my long term future planning as well.

>> That's a great resource as well. And in terms of Brandon, your husband, having being the person that oversees that special needs trust, you know, with the work that you do, you're a woman who is in her early 30s, the difference between your ABLE account and your special needs trust, could you tell folks a little bit about the different feel. There's a little bit of difference between the ABLE account versus the special needs trust. We have talked about this before.

>> So the biggest difference is that with a special needs trust, I'm not allowed to even though the trust is specifically for my benefit, I'm not allowed to interact with the funds in anyway, shape or form. Now because I have the mental capacity, I can tell my husband hey, you know, this is what I would like to spend these funds on or this is what we should be working for. Since he's the executor and not me, there's a line of succession you have to workout in case somebody passes away. So that's the biggest difference is that I can't I have no involvement with the money. I can't contribute to the special needs trust myself. Neither can my husband. It can't be either of our money but he can make the decision to spend it and it's ultimately more so for relatives who want to be able to leave things to me in their estate without compromising my benefits. Where as the ABLE account has my name on it. Can I make decisions whenever I want subject to the processing periods that the different programs put in place. Please make sure that you're aware of what those holding periods may or may not be. Because it can up to the company how they want to run their funds. But outside of that, I can make decisions at any time. I don't have to ask anybody. It's not taxable. Of course I still need to keep records. These can be audited just like anybody else. So you should still have an idea of what you're spending your money on but you don't have to do it's not like the nickel and dime accounting that people might be used to having with a typical social security case.

>> And your special needs trust can also roll into the able account and there's a lot of flexibility. We have comparison, you know, charts that we have done, able national resource center with the special needs alliance because there's absolutely benefits and times and ways a special needs trust might be the only thing someone needs or they could have both or they could just have an able account. There's nothing inherently wrong with any of these tools, it's just you can use them in different ways. If you need to, which you talked about in your podcast which is excellent, with Brian, that went out last week. We had three podcasts go out next week. But you talked about needing something for your chair that was pretty crucial and how you can use your ABLE account. Can you share with folks what that was?

>> Yeah, I actually had a couple of months ago, my brakes on my chair just stopped holding and even though I knew that it would probably be covered through Medicaid, if I went through the time and the effort of getting the work and signatures that were required because I already had funds available and it would be much quicker if I handled it as a private pay I made that decision for myself and was able to get what I needed within a week or two as opposed to probably a month or two if I went through the bureaucratic process and it was just it was a load off my mind a load off my husband's mind as well because he was worried about me when he wasn't able to stay here with me. Just, you know, not having to worry about my chair flying out from underneath me when I was getting in and out of it.

>> That's a health and safety issue for sure. Being able to get the breaks for the chair. That's an emergency issue. Saving for your HGTV quality home which I can't wait to see the pictures of when you get there but it's a huge range of things that all support your ability, you know, and your ability to work and put those additional funds from who you're working with. I encourage folks to check out your podcast as well. I'll have a few more questions for you during the round robin but for now I'll unpin you and I'll go over to Nathan and there you are.

>> It's so good to see you.

>> Good to see you. I'll give a little introduction. You can feel free to add to this. Similar to Simon, one of our newest ambassadors and able account owner in Ohio. He serves on a wide variety of stakeholder groups. He's a quality rater for his day job but you do a lot of volunteering and other consulting and work as a financial educator but those stakeholder groups you work with, you're on the board of trustees for the legal aid of western Ohio, the Ohio statewide independent living council and advocacy task force. Ohio self determination association, the Lucas county board of developmental disabilities board of directors where you are the first member who also had been served by the board previously. So that was a nice full circle you did there Nathan. Love how you did that.

>> I love it too.

>> And working with all the organizations supporting what we're doing here with our BIPOC, black indigenous and people of color outreach and communities. And you have a really significant background with benefits but as we're wrapping up you can tell us a little bit about what it means for you personally and also as a financial educator with the independent living center in Ohio.

>> I'd echo a lot of the sentiments that the other panelists have said but for me personally employment means the opportunity to learn new skills and give back to my community but also it just allows me to build wealth in ways I wouldn't have been able to previously because that provides more income than just living on cash benefits alone.

>> Can you share, it's interesting, you're a new ambassador with us. You opened your account the second day they were opened which is Ohio, they opened in June or July of 2019 and the month after that you were there.

>> July 18th of 2016 I opened my account.

>> So you had yours for awhile. You don't have the regret that some people say I wish I had opened this as soon as I could have. You pretty much did that, Nathan.

>> The only thing I wish is that it would have been available sooner. When I was going to school and growing up as a child to be able to save without having an impact on my public benefits and maintaining critical eligibility for Medicaid.

>> Yeah.

>> See when I initially opened my account, it wasn't about building wealth for me, it was about maintaining access to critically needed benefits and having a pathway to work and not have that disrupted.

>> Right and even the piece about, you were talking about before, disability advocates and leaders across the country were working for a solid decade before that trying to get this legislation passed. Even right now they're working to try to raise the age from 26 to 46. So you were there and ready to hit the ground running.

>> As a result of my work with the stakeholder organization, I closely followed the development of the able association.

>> They were all involved in that. It's interesting too because four or five years later what you were originally envisioning using your able account for, you have not just done that but gone a little further. Can you tell everyone here what are you able to do with your able account?

Especially related to employment but also generally that you wouldn't be able to do without it.

>> So I'm predominantly a saver. I use it to save for larger expenses. I live in an area with limited access for public transportation so I needed an accessibility vehicle to allow me to pursue employment. So my first dispersement from my ABLE account was to purchase an accessible vehicle and right now I'm saving for down payment on a home.

>> So we have a lot of like people that want to move into the home ownership space and that's key for building and accruing wealth and you're all at different stages and places with your employment and career trajectories as well.

>> What I love is they're so flexible for any type of employment situation. Sure a lot of people with disabilities are going to need access to supports like but they're so flexible. To have a more flexible requirement account. There's so much opportunity for people with disabilities to build wealth and pursue the things that people take for granted.

>> You were all influencers. Nathan, you work hand in hand with Margaret who is one of the

>> Yes.

>> She's a certified benefits Hi Margaret. The two of you together, the financial education classes you give, you have integrated sharing information about able accounts with people and with families because it is that tool and that resource and have been able to share some resources. We'll get to that in a minute. The resources that you find helpful to share with folks. We have a blog that you wrote that went out in our news letter last week.

>> Thank you for breaking the rules for me.

>> Oh, yeah. It's a great blog. We did a podcast with you in August. We have multiple opportunities to read what Nathan wrote as well as listen to Nathan and I have a more full chat about these kinds of topics. And that will be on the next slide. We'll go over to Brian. Can you go ahead it doesn't look like I can add the spotlight there. Hi, Brian.

>> Hey, how are you?

>> Good. Brian is coming to us today from Portland, Oregon and you're the parent of a 20 year old ABLE account owner. Who is on the cusp of employment and you similar with myself have worked with our ambassadors. You worked actually it's Brian's voice you'll hear on the podcast with Katy and Taylor and Chris. I'm not going to run through all the questions with you but I want to see if there's anything that you want to point out before we get to our round robin of questions at the end that you think that they should be making note of because we hear from working age folks that are working but your son is not quite there yet but you're on the brink of that and these things are coming. I want to hand it over to you to share any wisdom you might have especially with the lenses of disability employment being 30 years of your life with you as department of labor before you joined us.

>> I'm getting kind of old. I have been immersing myself in all things ABLE. I know a little bit about disability and employment and I have been learning a lot about ABLE and talking to people that know the regs and who know the law and who are using ABLE out in the world and I have a kid with an ABLE account here in Oregon. He's 20 years old and transitioning so the one thing that I can say about ABLE accounts that has struck me most significantly is something I'd like to repeat which is the person with the disability is in control of that ABLE account directly. And they get to decide how to apply the funds and when to apply the funds and, you know, there's many many stories in talking to ABLE account holders, a couple of them were cited here today. The brakes is the one I'm thinking of from Katy. But these are instances where people can take direct financial control of their lives and that leads to a much higher quality of living across the board. Now this is also true for employment. One of the things that Hardened me was hearing about people's career paths and why that Hardened me is all the folks we talked with they had pretty traditional career paths. They got an education and they were able to go out and have enough opportunities available to them that they could explore and make those determinations for themselves. I can say as somebody who has been around for a long time you didn't always hear that in the past. People with disabilities were limited to one or maybe if they were lucky two choices and they didn't get those kind of opportunities and I can see that operating in my kid's life too. He's young. He's in college. He's at university and he's studying.

>> Graphic design, right?

>> Design and he's making career plans and what is wonderful about it is that he has that in his tool kit. One thing that was critical to his transition is he has a support animal and he asked if he could get a support animal. I'll give a little information about our family. We have a lot of pets so we weren't interested in him getting a support animal if it was going to be a pet. So we said we're putting this in your hands. You do the research, you find out what it means to have I a support animal and the training and what it's going to do for you and how it's going to look and you're in control of paying for this with your ABLE account and I have to say, he did it all.

>> What a great thing to be able to take that leap. To make those kind of decisions young and having the money to make those decisions and that can be expensive. Those support animals.

>> It's quite expensive.

>> Thank you. I'm glad we were able to include you. We're going to do a lightning round of questions and I might. I'm going to start with in fact, I'm going to do this a little bit differently. I'll remove the spotlight from Brian. Taylor, would you mind hopping back on here with me and showing your camera?

SH I'm going to ask you all three of these questions real quick and then we'll go to everyone else. We were going to do a round and a round and a round. Why are you sharing your ABLE story with others?

Every person is different and everyone has their own dreams and needs and sharing my story is just a perspective for someone in my position or a similar position and just to see the opportunities that could be available to them and just to take that and build a future. Any future that they want.

>> That's great too. These are such a range of stories and that's why we wanted to, you know thank you for representing the 20 somethings. We wanted to cover the gambit and all the aspirations and goals you have. What resources and strategies do you find helpful and why?

>> I love the comparison tool.

>> Which one is that?

>> So the state comparison tool.

>> When you're choosing an ABLE program.

>> Yeah. Because I initially used it when I first opened my ABLE account and I was choosing. I needed to go out of state and I was just choosing between like I think Pennsylvania and Oregon and one other state. And just really allow me to see the pros and cons of each state. And even now when I'm volunteering at cottage rehabilitation hospital and a lot of our patients have disabilities and can benefit from ABLE accounts and they're like which one do I pick.

>> You have to look at your state one first. But those tools, there's great programs out there. It's not that one is better than the other. It's just there might be one that's a better fit for you.

>> Right. And I think the other one is on the ABLE age adjustment tool kit because a disability can occur at any age and your disability has to occur before 26 and there's so many different populations where it could be so useful and just reaching out to your congressman and saying hey, this is important and just having, especially the template where you can fill in the state's information and give personal details.

>> That's great to reference that, Taylor. Thank you. What's one piece of advice. A quick piece of advice that you might have for folks who are listening and they have been on the fence should I get an ABLE account or not.

>> I think definitely it's a great tool. I would say open one but that's a really common piece of advice. Use your support system. Talk with other people and just see what their experiences have been because there's so much help you can get and you have to look for it.

>> That's a great piece of advice. That's why we had the panelists on we had today. You are pioneers. What do you have to report back from your own experience. Appreciate it so much Taylor. Appreciate you being on the panel with us today. Congratulations on all you're doing with your ABLE account. I'm next going to go back over to Chris. All right, Chris. So why are you sharing your ABLE story with others?

>> I'm sharing my story with others because ABLE accounts are a very powerful tool for as Nathan said earlier people with disabilities to build wealth and building wealth allows us to weather hard times, take advantage of rare opportunities, and more deeply support causes we care about including causes related to our disabilities.

>> What do you think in terms of strategies and resources?

What have you found to be beneficial or what would you suggest folks check out and why?

>> Trying to figure out how to summarize it and make it consumable to me and people who are blind and there is a ton of information out there. It's really great and narrowed down to a few different choices. Decision guides are helpful in deciding whether you want to open up an able account. Where you want to open up an ABLE account. How you go about funding it. Those are probably the biggest tools. That I found the most helpful. For many people, what causes them to delay or not take advantage of something like this is the fear of making a mistake. So being able to listen to the podcast or webinars like this can give people a sense of I know what this is all about and people are doing this and they have done it so it's probably okay for me too. Don't be afraid to make a mistake. Making mistakes builds experience. But know that all of us have been able to succeed with this and we are all pretty ordinary. If it was right for us, it might be right for you too.

>> Thank you for joining the panel today and appreciate your words and sharing your resources and strategies and perspective and your story with everyone today. Next I'll go to Simon. You're up. Where are you sharing your able story?

>> Most are like I don't know how to achieve this goal. I don't know how to make this dream happen. I've heard that so many times over the years that when I heard about the ABLE account and I ended up establishing one myself I recognize that this is a good way for not only the young adults that have the same as I do or even the younger individuals, something their parents have to set up for them, this could be a means to make those dreams happen and have those and though them this is a very plausible or very good method of making the goals happen.

>> I think too you have been with us this year. We have created new resources. Do you have one that you think folks should check out in particular that you found useful?

>> I would say that the comparison tool, I know when I established my able account for myself I used that quite extensively. Like three different states and, you know, it happened to be the best for me. I actually had to relay it to my neurologist because I had a doctor's appointment with him and told him about the ABLE national resource center. He googled it and looked it up and he was like what is this about and elevator pitch to him and I need you to send me that website and I need to relay this over to a social worker department.

>> All neurologists should know this. Thank you for being one of our ambassadors. We appreciate you being on our panel today and sharing your story. I'm going to go next to Nathan to wrap us up and then we have a few resources to share here at the end. And Nathan, you're bringing us home. I have a few resources to share but I have a few minutes here with you. I'd love to hear from your perspective.

>> Happy to bring everyone home.

>> Financial education. Why are you sharing your ABLE story with others and what strategies and resources?

>> I'm sharing my story because I think back to our first conversation and when you told me there's a little over 100,000 accounts actually open and this just underscores the fact that there's a huge information void and disconnect particularly in BIPOC communities and peer support initiatives are essential to bridging the information gap and increasing the number of ABLE accounts that we have across the country.

>> And telling stories like your own. It makes it personal.

>> It does.

>> You can read his blog and check out his podcast.

>> I was inspired to become an ambassador by the webinars that you put together, one with Tim specifically inspired me to become an ambassador to your point.

>> We'll have to next time we talk to him.

>> I'm sure he would appreciate it.

>> I'm sure he would. I'm totally kidding about that. We're a nonprofit. But what's one piece of advice as we're wrapping up and I'll share resources.

>> So one piece of advice aside from opening the account and making small regular contributions is to stay connected with ABLE NRC through the news letter and not just because I'm featured in it this month.

>> Thank you for the plug although it's a very robust impactful news letter. Podcasts, spotlights, blogs.

>> They do a great job of pinpointing essential resources at the right time because there is a lot of information on the website so I think it's a great way to make it more resonant to our audience.

>> We try to make it topical. For August it was able to save and our campaign. For may it was mental health month and the power of ABLE accounts. We try to make it on a theme so it's a little more here's some bite sized pieces.

>> Thank you so much Nathan and all of our panel and I'll hop over now to our PowerPoint just so and you can see this I hope. I want to share in our final couple of moments this slide here has direct links to Taylor's ABLE podcast from last week. And Brian, he's the one that did the podcasts, they're excellent. We have a link to Nathan's able blog that he wrote. And we have Simon's able podcast. So check those out. They were all featured in the news letter that you should check out but in terms of where does ABLE stand today, I wanted to bring everyone up to speed. We're now at 45 states plus D.C. that have ABLE programs. We just had two new ones come on board. The IRS also finalized regulations. So the legislation passed in 2014 but there's also the new legislation proposed. And we'll keep you posted as that continues to move forward. ABLE accounts by the numbers, and this is the end of June, 2021. We don't have numbers yet but there's over 100,000 ABLE accounts that have been opened and that are currently active. Again there's 8 million people who are eligible. In terms of assets under management, that's $878 million in assets currently under management that doesn't include if someone already put a downpayment on a home or purchased a vehicle. That's the current amount that's in those accounts as of end of June and the average amount at the end of June was $8,074. Which those are real numbers. We wanted to share that with you. I'm going to share a couple of resources. Some of these our ambassadors talked about. Our website is rich with information. If you're looking for something and having a hard time finding it, there's a search function and you can type in keywords. It will be very helpful but get on our homepage. Check it out. Check out the information under the toolbars. Check out the resource sections. We have our road maps. Our road map to enrollment and road map to independence. That road map to enrollment will leave you off of the comparison tools because there's over 40 programs. We're acting out our resources. Finding the fund to save in an ABLE account. Determining whether something is a qualified disability expense, understanding ABLE account savings and public benefits and the fifth one, able accounts and working people with disabilities which is pretty relevant for national disability employment awareness month and the panel we just did. We also have our podcast series which includes the three that went out last week as well as six others. Do check those out. This is the link to our 2021 BIPOC ambassadors helping us with outreach to black and indigenous and other people of color communities and you can check out their stories and information here. We also have links to our three previous years of ambassadors and you can see all of their great faces. And you can hear them learn about goals with ABLE accounts so we have just some really good stories to share. And lived experiences and best practices. Finally our financial resilience center is also managed by the national disability institute that overseas the able national resource center and they have COVID 19 online resource center for people with disabilities and chronic health conditions. And we are still living with resources. Check out the financial resources center. Lastly, we have coming up on November 18th a 2:00 eastern. We have the ABLE for all savings plan. Our presenter is David bell with Oregon. I'll be facilitating and hop on in and learn about the plan that they have. They have Oregon state, Washington state, Maryland, Alabama, and Hawaii that are members of the coalition. We have other spotlight webinars so you can learn more and get a deeper dive into the programmatic side. Learn about their investment pie features. What other resources and tools they bring to the table so you can make good informed choices. We also archive all of our spotlights so that's good to check out as well. Folks, I want to wrap up by thanking our panel and thanking all of you for joining us here as we celebrate national disability employment awareness month. We hope that you'll share information about ABLE accounts and the ABLE national resource center with others who would benefit from it. Really hope you all enjoy the rest of your day. Thank you so much.