Proposal to restore benefits for Aid to the Needy Disabled program

SB-012, Sponsors: Senator Kefalas, Representative Exum

The assistance provided by the Aid to the Needy Disabled (AND) program to Colorado’s neediest population has declined in recent years. Although funding has remained stable through the recession, the monthly benefit declined as more people became eligible and enrolled in the program. Increasing funding to AND would ensure that those who are most affected by the great recession are not left behind.\(^1\) By providing a modest monthly cash grant to people with disabilities who are unable to work, AND serves as a critical safety net for the state’s most vulnerable citizens. In addition, an economic analysis shows that bolstering the program would provide a boost to the state’s economy.

AND is the only safety net while awaiting approval for SSI benefits

Colorado’s AND is only available to Colorado residents who are U.S. citizens, or have legal status, and are 18- to 59-years old with a disability that prevents them from working for at least six months. The value of all their assets must be less than $2,000. The program is designed to serve people who are unable to work and are awaiting approval to receive Supplemental Security Insurance (SSI) assistance from the federal government. AND recipients must apply for the SSI benefits.

Since the recession, AND need increased, benefits decreased

General Fund appropriations for AND have remained effectively unchanged since before the recession began. As economic conditions deteriorated, more Coloradans were forced to rely on AND, which drove down the monthly grant standard. Stagnant state funding has created undue pressure on the AND program (See Figure 1):

- Since fiscal year 2007, average monthly caseload has increased by nearly 2,000 people, growing to 7,295.
- In the same time span, the average monthly benefit provided to AND recipients decreased roughly 25 percent from $230/month to $175/month.\(^2\)

AND funding has fallen behind the need for aid


\(^2\) Figures based on data from the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Colorado Fiscal Institute. Figure 1: AND funding has fallen behind the need for aid.
Proposal
Colorado should secure the future of the AND program and restore funding to the pre-recession benefit level by linking the size of the benefit to the Federal Poverty Guidelines. Establishing the benefit at an amount that is equal to 28 percent of the Federal Poverty Guidelines income standard for a single person would return the benefit to its state fiscal year 2006-2007 level. The benefit would adjust appropriately each year with changes in the poverty measure.

The proposed changes would require a $7.7 million increase in AND funding. This proposal would relieve the substantial pressure on the program and its beneficiaries that was created by the 2007 recession by restoring benefit levels. It would also help ensure that benefits will keep up with increases in the cost of living.

AND benefits all Coloradans
In addition to serving the neediest Coloradans, increasing spending on AND by $7.7 million would provide a boost to Colorado’s economy. New AND spending would support an additional 200 jobs and spur roughly $15 million in economic output across the state.¹ AND funding is money well spent, and is the last line of support for the most vulnerable Coloradans.

Supporters
9to5 Colorado
All Families Deserve a Chance (AFDC) Coalition
Colorado Center on Law and Policy
Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Colorado Impact
Colorado Social Legislation Committee
Cross Disability Coalition of Colorado
Denver Urban Ministries
Mental Health America – Colorado
Metro Care Ring
The Legal Center for People with Disabilities and Older People

¹ Funding for AND comes from three main sources. The majority of funding for AND comes from the State General Fund. The Federal government provides some assistance in the form of reimbursement payments to the state when a person is approved for Federal Supplemental Security Insurance. A small amount of funding also comes from local level funds.

² Colorado Department of Human Services. Data from Fiscal Year 2006-2007 to Fiscal Year 2012-2013.

³ CCLP estimate of economic impact derived from IMPLAN input/output economic modeling software.