

Members of the Committee, Vice Chairs, and Chair,

My name is Rabbi Fora. I'm submitting a testimony in support of this measure.

One of the many jobs I've had was job coach for adults with disabilities. My clients were some of the most curious, industrious, kind, and eager folks I've ever had the privilege to serve. These folks woke up every day, in a society built around excluding them, and found ways to be involved anyway. They serve as active proof the myth "no one wants to work" is simply that, a fantasy.

One of the common barriers for service, ironically, is pay. If a client made too much per month, they risked jeopardizing their benefits. And I mean one dollar more can trigger an end to benefits.

So imagine you're a janitor making 18 dollars an hour. But, you have a condition that requires expensive treatment, possibly thousands of dollars; or your housing is tied to benefit status. Suddenly, through no intention on your part, you're on the hook for treatments you reasonably believed would be covered. You receive a notice of ineligibility from your housing complex. Or, you're subjected to another lengthy enrollment process before your benefits are retroactively reinstated. A process that wastes time and taxpayer money.

That money would be more wisely spent on a safety net such as this. By creating a separate program, DHS workers can more easily transfer clients between programs, lowering the chance of service disruptions for our most vulnerable workers.

It is worth noting this risk of benefits is actually a depressive factor for disabled people joining the workplace to begin with. Folks are made aware of this risk before they begin applying for jobs and there is a significant reduction in applicants who choose to move forward. Because the choice becomes trying to live off \$1,200 a month indefinitely or make \$2,000 but risk owing thousands of dollars. I had cases where the increase in monthly income from being employed wouldn't even cover the loss of EBT every month, potentially increasing their food insecurity.

I would love to know who in this room would like to trade places.

No one should be punished for participating in the workforce. People with disabilities serve at all levels of society. For instance, I have diagnoses of Autism and ADHD. But because I learned to hide many of my symptoms, what's called masking, my direct experiences with ableism in the workplace have been minimal when compared to my former clients.

This has allowed me to have a foot in both worlds. It also compels me to speak up in moments like this for folks who are less verbal or less social. In order to protect our fundamental right to "cost-effective, clinically appropriate, and affordable healthcare", I strongly encourage the committee to vote in favor of SB 20.

Thank you for the privilege to speak with you today.