



## **2016 Legislative Agenda**

### **Create an “Achieving a Better Life Experience” (ABLE) Program in Washington**

**Providing people with disabilities and their families the opportunity to create a tax-exempt saving account that can be used for maintaining health, independence, and quality of life**

- Creating an ABLE program in Washington is a win/win program for our disabled citizens, their families - and for the state. Pursuant to the federal law, Washington residents can only participate if Washington – like most other states – creates its own ABLE program.
- If the Legislature creates an ABLE program, eligible people with disabilities could hold up to \$100,000 “of their own money” in tax-advantaged saving accounts.
- Contributions of up to \$14,000 per year are allowed – without affecting their eligibility for Federal SSI, Medicaid and other means-tested public benefits.
- To iron out program and implementation details, the 2015 Legislature created a work group by passing 2SH2063. This legislatively authorized work group made recommendations in a November 2015 report to the Legislature about how to best implement an ABLE program in Washington. A bill will be introduced in the 2016 session that encompasses nearly every recommendation made by this workgroup.
- Many disabled people want to work and productive citizens but are have been discouraged from doing so because they would lose federal benefits based on their earnings. An ABLE program would provide these disabled people with the ability to work and save by protecting a portion of their income and savings from counting against their federal and state benefits.
- In line with other state’s experience, Washington’s start-up costs are estimated to be approximately \$1 million to establish and properly administer an ABLE program. Once established and fully operating, the ABLE program is expected to rely on administrative fees to self-supporting in a manner similar to the GET program.