



See Our Ability

June 30, 2021

My name is Cindy Bentley, I am a registered Voter in the state of Wisconsin. I am also the Executive Director of People First Wisconsin.

**About People First Wisconsin (PFW)**

*People First Wisconsin is a non-profit organization that helps people to speak up for themselves, to start and support local self-advocacy groups, to work together with self-advocates across Wisconsin on issues important to our membership, to work with our advocacy groups in Wisconsin to change things that need to be changed and to be a part of the decisions that affect people with disabilities in Wisconsin.*

I am writing to you today because I am concerned about the future of SSI in Wisconsin. As it stands right now, SSI would just cover the cost of my apartment. This does not include any other living/food expenses. I am full time working, contributing taxpayer, just like you. Yet the current limits set up for SSI, do not allow me to have more than \$2,000.00 in my accounts. I have to spend down my hard earned money. I am penalized for working.

The government sends a mixed message to those of us who are working. Then there are those people who abuse the system, just living off the government. These people have the ability to work, but they choose not to, they would rather get a hand out. I enjoy working and using my mind to help others. It's good for my health and keeps me on an even keel. I was able to continue working throughout the pandemic and my organizations mission continued to thrive. I was still able to buy food and other items I needed for myself.

Also, why do we continue to penalize people with disabilities who choose to marry. That is just not right. People with disabilities who receive SSI are penalized when they marry and stand to lose almost a quarter of their SSI. If both parties are receiving benefits, they stand to lose almost half of their combined benefits.

***President Biden proposed several SSI fixes in his campaign platform that would dramatically improve the lives of adults and children with disabilities and low-income seniors, including:***

- Increasing SSI asset limits and income disregards
- Allow people to receive help from family without being penalized by in-kind maintenance and support (ISM) rules
- Ensuring SSI benefits lift people out of poverty
- Eliminating marriage penalties

**Please prioritize SSI fixes in the upcoming recovery package, especially increasing asset limits and income disregards and eliminating the family support (ISM) rules, eliminate the marriage penalties.**

Sincerely,

Cindy Bentley

People First Wisconsin