

Forlini's bill to help families care for the disabled signed

Bill authorizes tax-exempt savings accounts to pay for certain expenses

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Michigan residents who live with people with a disability will now be able to set up tax-exempt saving accounts to help them pay for expenses such as education and transportation, under legislation authored by a Macomb County lawmaker.

The Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act was signed into law on Friday by Lt. Gov. Brian Calley in a ceremony in Lansing that included the bill's author, state Rep. Tony Forlini, R-Harrison Township.

"These families face struggles that most of us cannot imagine," Forlini said in a news release. "This program not allows families to save for their loved ones, but these accounts incentiv-

ize long-term savings and financial stability for those who need it most."

Forlini, a Mount Clemens financial planner with 33 years of experience, crafted House Bill 4542 to set up ABLE savings accounts to be used for expenses relating to education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, personal support services, financial management, legal fees and other items.

The package is modeled after the federal ABLE legislation and similar to college education savings accounts. The accounts will not have any affect on the family's eligibility for Supplemental Security Income, Medicaid and other benefits, according to Forlini.

Along with establishing the Michigan ABLE Act, the legislation also amended



COURTESY OF MICHIGAN HOUSE REPUBLICANS

State Rep. Tony Forlini and others give a thumbs-up after Lt. Gov. Brian Calley formally signed the Michigan ABLE Act, which authorizes special tax-free savings accounts for residents caring for individuals with a disability.

the Michigan Education Savings Plan (MESP).

Prior to Friday's signing,

Michigan ranked as one of the lowest in the country

in terms of the amount of

money individuals could deposit into an education-savings

account with a maxi-

imum balance of \$235,000. The maximum amount will now be \$500,000, making the state one of the highest in the country for tax-free savings.

Forlini, a former Harrison Township supervisor, said he started to work on the package of bills as soon as Congress approved the federal ABLE program in late 2014.

"This legislation can help set the standard for the rest of the country on these accounts should be run," he said. "Michigan values education, and Michigan values those are least able to help themselves."

Calley handled the signing ceremony on Friday as Gov. Rick Snyder is attending the 2015 Ontario Economic Summit. Forlini said it was appropriate for Calley to attend since he has a daughter who is autistic and he has been a leading advocate for the disabled in Michigan.