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H 724 ABLE

March 9, 2016 – Nicole LeBlanc

Testimony to House Committee on
Commerce and Economic Development

Good afternoon. Thank you for asking me to testify on behalf of Vermonters with disabilities. I'm Nicole LeBlanc from Montpelier. I am the Advocacy Director for Green Mountain Self-Advocates, a disability rights organization. I'm on the Autism Spectrum and I get Developmental Disabilities Services to work 30 hours a week and to live on my own in an apartment in Montpelier, in the think of town.

As I have said previously, my advocacy to promote economic independence through the ABLE Act started in 2009. I want to thank this committee for all your hard work to make ABLE accounts a reality in the lives of Vermonters with disabilities. On behalf of over 600 members of Green Mountain Self-Advocates, we have reviewed H 724 and anticipate it will have a needed and positive impact on people with disabilities. We do not have any recommendations to contribute.

We strongly support having an ABLE Act Taskforce until ABLE Accounts are fully implemented. One reason we are supportive of the Task Force is because they have done an excellent job including the voices and concerns of people with disabilities and their families,

In closing, I would like to mention two issues.

1. We are pleased to see that the asset limit for the Medicaid for Working People with Disabilities program is being raised to 10,000.
2. Regarding ABLE accounts, I was in Washington DC last week and had an opportunity discuss ABLE accounts with other advocates. I learned that states do not have to wait for the IRS to issue final regulations to start implementing ABLE Accounts. Members of Green Mountain Self-Advocates continue to be available to participate in whatever ways we can be helpful to move the process forward here in Vermont.

Thank you again for all your attention to details to pass the H 724. We look forward to the full implementation of the VT ABLE Savings Program.