

Fact Sheet-AB1703

For persons who are blind or visually impaired or who have other disabilities that make it difficult to read print materials, access to written information and the ability to complete financial and other documents that are part of our daily lives is one of the greatest challenges that we face. The ability to access and respond to notices of action sent by federal, state, and local entities, financial documents, and the myriad of other important items that we receive through the mail is a crucial element in handling our day-to-day affairs. Yet, for those with print impairments, including those who are blind or visually impaired, the reading of mail can be an extremely hit-or-miss proposition, depending upon whether a friend, family member or other person is around to help with that task.

For recipients of the IHSS program, this problem is exacerbated by the fact that they do not have the excess income that can be used to hire a person to accomplish the reading and completion of documents. For almost two decades, the California Council of the Blind, the largest organization of Californians who are blind or have low vision, has been seeking to end this inequitable situation by working for the passage of legislation that will include the reading of documents as a service under the IHSS program. During the 2007-08 session, AB238, which would have added this service to the IHSS program, passed the Legislature but was vetoed by the Governor.

Now, Assemblymember Isadore Hall has introduced, at the request of the California Council of the Blind, AB1703, which would include as an IHSS program service the reading and completion of financial and other documents for those who have a disability that affects his or her ability to read.. The cost of implementing the bill is minimal and the bill contains language requiring the State Department of Health Care Services to obtain permission to fund the bill partially from federal funds.

The bill is already supported by many providers and recipients alike. We would urge all advocacy groups of seniors and persons with disabilities to support this important piece of legislation.