

SR-134, As Adopted by Senate, September 27, 2012

Senator Green offered the following resolution:

Senate Resolution No. 134.

A resolution to memorialize Congress to change the eligibility requirements for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income benefits for individuals with a terminal illness.

Whereas, All workers in our country pay into the Social Security system. While primarily a program to help older Americans in retirement, Social Security is also a fundamental element of our country's safety net through Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The federal government also provides additional help through the Supplementary Security Income (SSI) program, which is paid for by general revenues and is not tied to work history. These programs are both administered by the Social Security Administration; and

Whereas, SSDI is aimed at helping people who are unable to work due to severe, permanent disabilities. Eligibility for this program includes a five-month waiting period. There is no waiting period to receive SSI benefits, which provide additional support to low-income people who are aged, blind, or disabled; and

Whereas, People suffering from terminal illnesses who seek benefits through SSDI currently are subject to the five-month waiting period. This delay applies even when the person is not expected to live that long. Since a person with such a diagnosis may not immediately qualify under the SSI program, this presents a serious problem for these individuals. To compound the suffering of these individuals by delaying assistance is wrong. This problem could be solved through the creation of a waiver of the five-month delay for individuals diagnosed with a terminal illness or through changes to the SSI program or both;

Whereas, SSDI and SSI are in place to provide a modicum of assistance to those facing severe hardships. Clearly, anyone diagnosed with a terminal illness that includes a prognosis of only a few months to live should be able to obtain this assistance. With proper procedures for review and a requirement for a concurring diagnosis, such a change to the eligibility requirements should be implemented; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, That we memorialize Congress to change the eligibility requirements for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplementary Security Income benefits for individuals who have been diagnosed by a physician as terminally ill when the diagnosis has been confirmed by another qualified physician and includes an estimation that the illness will result in death within six months of the diagnosis; and be it further

Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, and the members of the Michigan congressional delegation.