



## Helping Residents with Disabilities Until They Can Access Federal Assistance

By Jessica Fulton

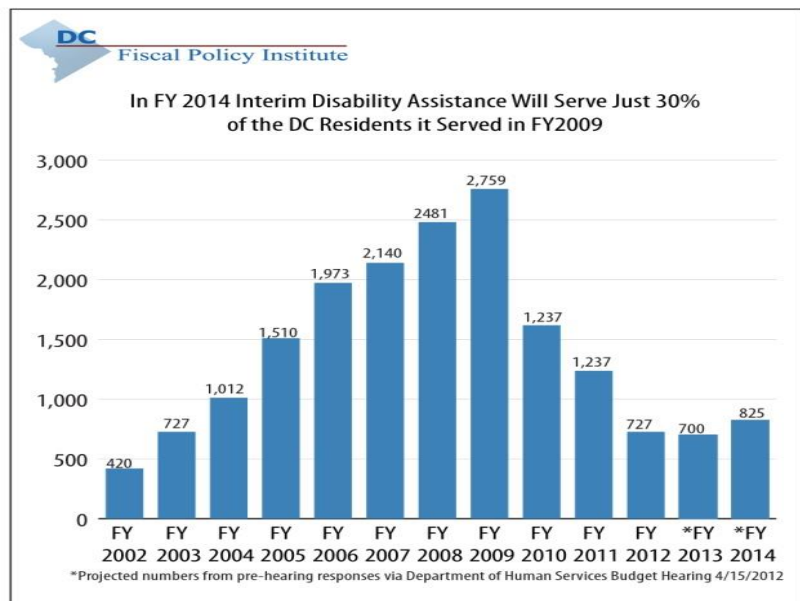
We have some good news to share on this rainy Monday! Some 360 DC residents with disabilities soon will get assistance from the District while they wait for their application for federal benefits to be considered. These residents will receive \$270 a month from DC's Interim Disability Assistance (IDA) program until the federal benefits approval process is complete.

Yet even with this expansion, the number of IDA recipients will be two-thirds lower than it was just a few years ago. That is why we recommend that the DC Council increase the IDA budget in fiscal year (FY) 2014.

IDA serves residents who are facing a tough time—unable to work, and awaiting approval for federally funded Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, a process that can take a year or two. IDA provides critical assistance during this period, helping residents afford rent, food, and medication. Left without income from work or this assistance, many people with disabilities may be forced into even more dire circumstances, like homelessness or more serious illness.

The Interim Disability Assistance program has a low cost to the District, because the federal government reimburses the District after a resident's federal SSI applications is approved. DC's recovery rate is in line with similar state programs across the U.S. The

FY 2014 budget also includes \$1 million on its [contingency list](#), services that will be funded if revenues rise above current projections, to help first time applicants for SSI. This has been shown to increase the likelihood of being approved for those benefits and could increase DC's reimbursement rate.



Local funding for IDA has been slashed in recent years, from \$5.6 million in FY 2008 to just \$1.5 million in the proposed FY 2014 budget. The number of individuals served by the program has dropped by more than 70 percent, from 2,900 to 825.

IDA is a good investment in the well-being of residents with disabilities and for the city as a whole. The District can ensure an additional 1,200 residents get this critical assistance in FY 2014 by adding \$3.9 million to IDA.

DCFPI has put together our official FY 2014 budget priority list. The list includes increased funding to help DC residents who are currently in crisis, give our children safe places to learn and grow, give parents the tools they need to succeed in the job market, help residents coping with the high costs of housing, and ensure that residents have access to health care. We also take a close look at revenue changes, and technical issues that can be changed in the legislation that supports the budget. You can take a look at our priorities [here](#).