

In Most States, GA-U Fills Gaps in Economic Security and Health Care Systems

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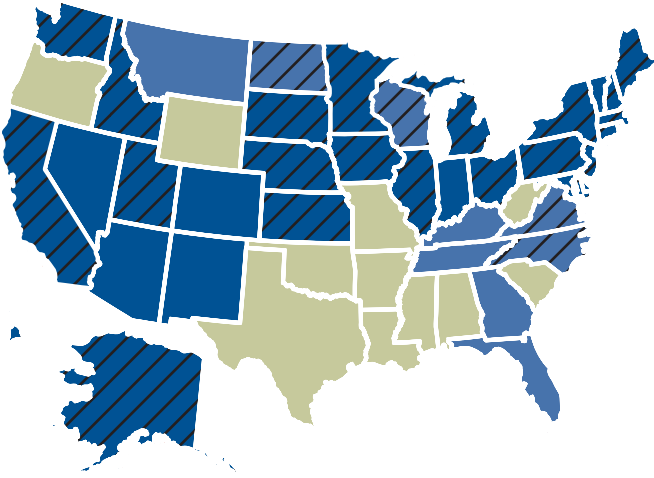
We all hope that if we were ever to face disability, we would have the supports necessary to maintain our economic security. The General Assistance-Unemployable (GA-U) program is designed to help fill that need for thousands of people in our state. It is an essential component of Washington State’s efforts to ensure economic security and access to health care for all residents.

GA-U provides financial and medical assistance to adults who are unable to work due to disability and are ineligible for other programs. For these adults, GA-U fills gaps that would otherwise exist in our support systems:

- Unemployment insurance and workers’ compensation benefits often expire well before longer-term disability benefits become available.
- Eligibility for other assistance programs is very limited for adults who do not have children at home, even for adults who are unable to work.

For these Washingtonians, GA-U provides some protection from deep poverty and homelessness that would otherwise not be available.

Governor Gregoire has proposed the complete elimination of GA-U, including both financial and medical assistance. Such a decision would have a detrimental impact on the Washingtonians who rely on the program. As shown by a number of studies, it would also add significant costs with regard to health care and public safety systems in the state.¹



 Statewide programs (31)	 No program (11)
 County programs (9)	 Medical assistance (29)

The proposed elimination would put us out of step with the rest of the country (see map).² Most states in the nation recognize the importance of meeting this need. Thirty-one states across the country have statewide GA-U programs with financial and/or medical benefits. Another nine states have GA-U programs available in some counties, but not in others. In total, only 11 states (Oregon, Wyoming, and nine Southern states) do not have comparable programs.

1. Citations available at schmudget.blogspot.com.
 2. Budget & Policy Center analysis of unpublished Urban Institute data.