

## Transcript of remarks by SLW on eligible age for elderly CSSA

Following is the transcript of remarks by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, on adjusting the eligible age for elderly Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) from 60 to 65 after attending a radio programme this morning (January 14):

Reporter: It seems that there is a very slim chance for any of the proposed changes to be delayed or withdrawn. Why are you putting out such a firm position?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: The decision has been made for two years since the announcement of the change in policy back in the 2017 Policy Address. After that, it was just a matter of implementation. I would say we have been not too promptly in executing the decision that has been made two years ago. And now, we are going to implement the policy that was made two years ago. So, the decision has been made. So, to revise that policy or to revise that decision would take, I would say, a very long path. It is almost impossible for us to do anything before February 1.

Reporter: So how would the Government respond to the public outcry so far? Will there be any special measures to help them in the process?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: We are considering what kind of measures, particularly administrative measures, that can be done before February 1 or be implemented by February 1 to help those who are needy and to provide more support for them, no matter in terms of welfare or in terms of employment support.

Reporter: Can you give some examples?

Secretary for Labour and Welfare: Within our welfare system, there are always elements that the public have expressed their views on needy improvement. In fact, one of the measures that was actually mentioned in the past few days – it was related to the disregarded earnings (for CSSA recipients), which basically means that, for those who earn some money while they are receiving CSSA, they can preserve some of their money (monthly earnings from employment) in their own pocket. At the present moment, it is \$2,500 (total disregarded earnings per month) at the maximum. That was set back in 2003, which is almost 16 years ago. So, it is definitely time to review that particular amount. Because of the recent discussion, there may be a necessity to advance some of the changes that we had already been considering in the past.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)