



Advancing the human and civil rights of people with disabilities

SELF-ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE ★ LEGAL SERVICES ★ DISABILITY RIGHTS EDUCATION ★ PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY ★ ABUSE INVESTIGATIONS

December 18, 2017

Honorable Sam Johnson
Chairman
Social Security Subcommittee
House Ways and Means Committee
2304 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable John Larson
Ranking Member
Social Security Subcommittee
House Ways and Means Committee
1501 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Larson:

On behalf of Equip for Equality, the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) system for Illinois, I want to thank you for introducing the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017. This bipartisan legislation will result in improvement in and strengthening of Social Security's representative payee program through permanent independent oversight to protect beneficiaries of the Social Security program from fraud and exploitation while reducing reporting burdens on families. We strongly support the enactment of H.R. 4547.

Equip for Equality's mission is to advance the human and civil rights of children and adults with disabilities throughout Illinois. We accomplish our mission through a variety of legal and advocacy services, monitoring programs and facilities throughout the state to ensure safety and quality of services and supports, investigations of abuse, neglect and exploitation, public policy initiatives and training and education activities.

Our experience reviewing and monitoring the actions of representative payees, when that function was previously handled by the nationwide network of P&A systems, confirms the critical need for this legislation. Not only did we discover settings that were unsafe, but we identified representative payees that were exploitive, and who were commingling and otherwise mishandling beneficiaries' funds. This bipartisan legislation proposes the changes necessary to streamline the representative payee program and, more importantly, increase independent oversight of the program which news stories, reports by the Office of Inspector General and Government Accountability Office reports, and hearings held by the House Ways and Means Committee all demonstrated was in need of such changes.

THE INDEPENDENT, FEDERALLY MANDATED PROTECTION & ADVOCACY SYSTEM FOR THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

DUANE C. QUAINI, BOARD CHAIRPERSON ZENA NAIDITCH, PRESIDENT & CEO

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Again, we greatly appreciate your work on this important issue. Should you have any questions or need additional information for the passage of this Act, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zena Naiditch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Zena" being more prominent and the last name "Naiditch" following in a similar style.

Zena Naiditch