

**COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515**

August 17, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Saul  
Commissioner  
Social Security Administration  
6401 Security Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Saul,

Last March, in response to the COVID-19 crisis the Social Security Administration (SSA) prioritized work that fulfills the agency's core mission of providing benefits to children, adults, and seniors who are eligible for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). At the same time, SSA also suspended processing and collecting overpayments of benefits, where possible.

We have fully supported these necessary responses by SSA to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SSA's decision to suspend overpayment processing and collection has prevented substantial stress and confusion among Social Security and SSI beneficiaries who, like all Americans, have had their lives thrown into crisis by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also allowed SSA to focus on its highest-priority workloads, including ensuring benefit payments were delivered on time, processing new applications, and working with Congress and the Department of the Treasury to ensure that SSA beneficiaries received timely Economic Impact Payments. Through this action, SSA has rightly ensured that high-risk seniors, survivors, and people with disabilities continue to receive monthly benefits they need to cover basic necessities during the pandemic.

At the same time, SSA's suspension of overpayment collection has meant that, by no fault of their own, some of our most vulnerable constituents have unknowingly received extra benefit payments. We are deeply concerned that attempts to recover these COVID-19 overpayments would frighten and harm people of color, seniors, people with severe disabilities, and other beneficiaries who live in or near poverty and rely on Social Security or SSI to survive. SSA has not notified beneficiaries that they are being overpaid, and most will have spent their checks immediately. SSI recipients, in particular, will have thought that they had to spend their benefits to avoid reaching the \$2,000 asset limit and losing SSI eligibility.

These and other vulnerable beneficiaries will not be able to afford repayments, and past experience suggests most will be unable to navigate SSA's case-by-case process for appeals or relief, even after the pandemic ends. Administering individual overpayment appeals and waiver requests is also very costly for SSA, using time and resources that

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could be better devoted to fulfilling the agency's core mission in support of the American public during the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 crisis.

We hope you will agree that the only just and humane approach is for SSA to continue to hold Social Security and SSI beneficiaries harmless for these COVID-19 overpayments. We have introduced the *Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act* to provide a clear legislative directive for this commonsense solution.

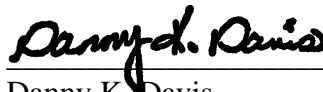
We urge SSA to continue to temporarily suspend overpayment processing and collection while we work toward agreement on a bipartisan coronavirus relief package which includes the *Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act*. We also urge SSA to use all existing authority to provide beneficiaries with immediate relief from these COVID-19 overpayments.

We stand ready to work with you to ensure that actions that SSA has taken during the pandemic to assist seniors, survivors, and people with severe disabilities do not have the unintended consequence of creating new and unfair financial distress.

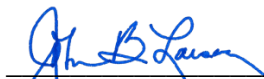
Sincerely,



Richard E. Neal  
Chairman  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives



Danny K. Davis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support  
Committee on Ways and Means  
U.S. House of Representatives



John B. Larson  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Social Security  
Committee on Ways and Means  
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