

December 15, 2017

Representative Sam Johnson
Chairman
Social Security Subcommittee
House Ways and Means Committee
2304 Rayburn, House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA Fax: 202-225-1485

Representative John Larson
Ranking Member
Social Security Subcommittee
House Ways and Means Committee
1501 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA Fax: 202-225-1031

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Larson,

I write today on behalf of Disability Rights Texas (DRTx), to thank you for your support of H.R. 4547, the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017. Enactment of H.R. 4547 will provide critical protections for Social Security beneficiaries as well as needed reforms to the representative payee program.

My name is Mary Faithfull and I am the Executive Director at Disability Rights Texas. Disability Rights Texas did reviews of Organizational Representative Payees on behalf of the Social Security Administration for 5 years when the contract for this was in place with the Protection and Advocacy Network. While doing the Representative Payee review work we uncovered numerous problems in how some Representative Payees carried out their responsibilities that compromised the welfare of the beneficiaries they were supposed to serve.

We know firsthand how this partnership between the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the P&A systems will not only allow SSA to meet their responsibilities, but also allows the P&A systems to uncover and address health and safety issues and other matters important to the beneficiary that fall outside of SSA's purview. An example of this benefit from our prior work involved a review that revealed a representative payee who had obtained legal guardianship of 53 individual's with intellectual disabilities. The payee was evasive when contacted and would not provide all required financial records. The beneficiaries and their care givers shared numerous complaints to the reviewer about bills not being paid on time, medical needs not being met, an overall lack of involvement, and reduced personal spending when the Payee (who was already being paid for the service) kept an additional \$20 each month of the individual's limited \$60/month allowance with no justification. We recommended to SSA that the payee be removed for all beneficiaries. Following the review, there were numerous complaints regarding the payee's guardianship responsibilities which resulted in the State of Texas removing all those assigned and licensure was identified as being "ineligible for renewal".

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Another example involved a female beneficiary whose nursing home served as her Representative Payee. They failed to provide her with clothing after losing them in the laundry. When we found her she had not been given any clothes for over 10 months. This was reported to the proper authority and resulted in a State inspection of the facility and ultimately provision of clothing to the beneficiary.

Thank you again for all you are doing in promoting this critical legislation. Should you have any questions or need more information, please be in touch. I can be reached at 512-407-2758 or via email at mfaithfull@drtx.org.

Sincerely,



Mary Faithfull,
Executive Director