



December 13, 2017

The Honorable Sam Johnson, Chairman
The Honorable John B. Larson, Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
2018 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Larson:

On behalf of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), I am writing to offer our strong support for the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017 (HR 4547). As the nation's largest organization representing people living with mental illness and their families, I am pleased to offer our support for this long overdue measure to improve and strengthen the Social Security Administration's (SSA) representative payee program.

In NAMI's view, the focus of the SSA Representative Payee program should be on assisting beneficiaries in using their monthly cash assistance to meet their specific individual needs. This is especially the case for recipients of Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) living with serious mental illness. Unfortunately, over the years effective oversight of the program by SSA has been lacking. HR 4547 includes a number of important reforms that will streamline the program, as well as takes important steps to increase oversight and monitoring of Representative Payee performance. These steps should help ensure greater integrity in how Representative Payees manage beneficiary cash assistance.

NAMI looks forward to supporting your efforts to advance HR 4547 in the House this year and ensuring that the administrative savings it generates will be invested in improving the overall administrative performance of SSA. Thank you for your leadership in bringing forward this bipartisan legislation to protect the interests of the people with mental illness and other disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Giliberti". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Giliberti, J.D.
Chief Executive Officer