

**January 10, 2017**

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**Representative Sam Johnson**  
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**Social Security Subcommittee**  
**House Ways and Means Committee**  
**2304 Rayburn House Office**  
**Washington, DC. 20515**

**Representative John Larson**  
**Ranking Member**  
**Social Security Subcommittee**  
**1501 Longworth House Office Building**  
**Washington, DC. 20515**

**Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Larson:**

**On behalf of the Disability Law Center (DLC), I write in strong support of H.R. 4547, the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017. Enactment of this legislation will provide critical protections for Social Security beneficiaries as well as needed reforms to the crucial representative payee program.**

**The DLC is designated by the governor as the congressionally-mandated protection and advocacy agency for Utah. The organization's mission is to enforce and strengthen laws that protect the opportunities, choices, and legal rights of people with disabilities in Utah. We are the only agency that provides self-advocacy assistance, legal services, disability rights education, on-site monitoring and investigation of conditions in institutions and long-term care facilities, and systemic advocacy through the courts, the legislature, and public policy initiatives on behalf of the more than 300,000 Utahns with disabilities. Our services are available statewide and free of charge. In FY 2017, the DLC received almost 4,000 requests from nearly 3,500 individuals with issues ranging from special education to employment discrimination to accessing needed resources or supports in the community or institutions.**

**News stories, Office of Inspector General and Government Accountability Office reports, and hearings held by the House Ways and Means Committee have demonstrated the need for changes in the representative payee program. Your bipartisan legislation proposes many important and needed changes that will streamline the program as well as take important steps to increase oversight of the representative payee program by funding the nationwide**

network of P&A systems to monitor how representative payees are administering the Social Security funds received by beneficiaries.

Fortunately, the DLC did not find similarly serious concerns or violations among the 29 Utah rep payee sites the Social Security Administration (SSA) asked us to review during the five years the P&A network held the contract for the program. However, we believe the need for independent oversight of the Representative Payee Program is clear.

Again, we greatly appreciate your work together on this important issue culminating in the introduction of this critical legislation. We stand ready to work with both of you to quickly get this important legislation enacted into law. Should you have any questions or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 801-363-1347 x 3220 or [azahradnikova@disabilitylawcenter.org](mailto:azahradnikova@disabilitylawcenter.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adina Zahradnikova". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal line at the end.

Adina Zahradnikova  
*Executive Director*  
Disability Law Center