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January 31, 2018

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

Representative 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 Disability Rights Tennessee (DRT), 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.

DRT serves as the Protection & Advocacy (P&A) agency for the state of Tennessee. We provide legal advocacy services for people with disabilities in areas such as employment discrimination, safety in schools, abuse and neglect, and access to community resources and services.

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.

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. For example, in a past monitoring DRT encountered a case of financial exploitation wherein a beneficiary who could not eat (uses a feeding tube) was paying for groceries in a group home setting. This type of financial abuse cannot be tolerated and requires scrutiny by a network who understands and has experience with the disability community.

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Again, we greatly appreciate your work 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 reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Primm', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lisa Primm, Executive Director