



January 18, 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 of West Virginia (DRWV), 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.

Disability Rights of West Virginia (DRWV) is a private non-profit agency dedicated to protecting and advocating for the legal rights of West Virginians with disabilities. DRWV is designated as West Virginia's Protection and Advocacy System (P&A). DRWV works to ensure that West Virginians with disabilities have access to the same opportunities afforded all members of society, and can live full, productive lives, totally integrated into their communities with as much self-direction and independence as possible.

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.

Previously, DRWV was funded to do representative payee monitoring work. Some problems found with representative payees included:

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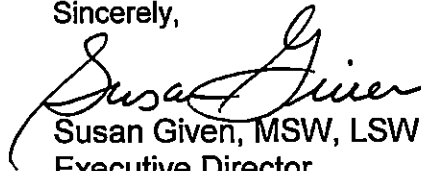
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- ❖ Cases of representative payees charging fees for administering the accounts, when they did not have authorization from the Social Security Administration to do so.
- ❖ Cases whereby questionable purchases were made from the representative payee/provider staff either selling items of significant cost to the beneficiary, or purchasing items from beneficiary.
- ❖ Cases reviewed in which it was determined that the representative payee owed the beneficiary money. These ranged from small amounts to very significant amounts. For example the representative payee may have paid a large bill on behalf of the beneficiary (for whom they were providing services, their clients) and set up a payment plan for the beneficiary to repay the agency, but did not stop withdrawing money from the account, after the bill was paid in full.
- ❖ Cases in which the representative payee put all the beneficiaries' social security funds for whom they were the representative payee, into a single bank account.

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 feel free to contact me

Sincerely,

  
Susan Given, MSW, LSW  
Executive Director