

December 21, 2017

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

Re: H.R. 4547 Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Larson:

I write today on behalf of Disability Rights Wisconsin, in strong 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. Disability Rights Wisconsin is Wisconsin's designated protection and advocacy system for people with disabilities. In the past, Disability Rights Wisconsin has monitored representative payees for Social Security beneficiaries in order to mitigate the risk of fraud and to determine if Social Security beneficiaries have been abused, neglected, or financially exploited.

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 current representative payee program. H.R. 4547 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.

During the period that Disability Rights Wisconsin provided representative payee oversight in Wisconsin, we learned of resident mistreatment where we were able to intercede on the resident's behalf. We also assisted representative payees so they could follow procedures and handle beneficiaries' money correctly and provided reassurance to beneficiaries by answering their questions. H.R. 4547 will allow the network of P&A systems to again provide this crucial oversight of the representative payee program.

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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 contact me at 608-267-0214.

Sincerely,



Daniel Idzikowski
Executive Director

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