

Kansas Developmental Disabilities Coalition

Advocating for Kansans with Intellectual / Developmental Disabilities since 1999

December 26, 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

Dear Chairman Johnson and Ranking Member Larson:

I wanted to send you both a message of thanks for your help with H.R. 4547, the Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017. This legislation is critically important in protecting Social Security beneficiaries. It also provides focus and creates much needed reform to the representative payee program.

I write to you on behalf of the Kansas Developmental Disabilities Coalition (KDDC). The KDDC is in strong support of H.R. 4547. The KDDC is the largest coalition in Kansas of self-advocates, families and service providers in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities communities. Collectively, the KDDC serves or advocates for all of the approximately 60,000 Kansans with intellectual or developmental disabilities (Down Syndrome, Autism, etc.).

As I am sure you are aware, many highly credible sources have findings, information and data which support passage of H.R. 4547. The Office of Inspector General reports, Government Accountability Office reports, media stories, and hearings held by the House Ways and Means Committee have demonstrated the need for changes in the representative payee program as proposed in H.R. 4547. H.R. 4547 is a bipartisan solution to a very real, yet solvable, problem. This legislation creates meaningful and much needed changes. It will create efficiencies and create much needed oversight in the Social Security program. It funds a desperately needed program through the nationwide network of P&A systems to monitor how representative payees are administering the Social Security funds received by beneficiaries.

As the parent of a son who has a disability and receives Social Security disability benefits, I want to personally thank you both for working together to advance H.R. 4547. My son's name is Ryan. He has a Traumatic Brain Injury he acquired in a car

crash. Due to his disabilities, Ryan asked me to be his Representative Payee for his Social Security benefits, and I have stepped up and done so. However, as a Representative Payee, it has become painfully obvious that boots on-the-ground monitoring is absolutely needed of this important program. I hear complaints often from fellow Representative Payees that when they submit their Rep. Payee paperwork it seemingly goes into something of a bureaucratic 'black hole' without any follow up or targeted monitoring. No one is minding the store, literally. This bill provides that much needed and targeted monitoring as well as the boots-on-the-ground through the existing Protection and Advocacy system network. This Protection and Advocacy System gives Congress the nationwide presence you need to be able to implement H.R. 4547 and restore accountability. The Kansas Developmental Disabilities Coalition and many other disability organizations nationwide stand ready to work with both of you to pass this bill. We agree that time is of the essence. We agree that Congress must act quickly to get this important legislation enacted into law.

If you have any questions, please contact me as a representative of the KDDC.

Thank you,

Rocky Nichols
Kansas Developmental Disabilities Coalition