

Disability Rights IOWA

Law Center for Protection and Advocacy™

January 16, 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 Iowa, 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.

In addition to representing individuals with disabilities to protect their legal and human rights, Disability Rights Iowa conducts extensive monitoring of facilities throughout Iowa, including nursing facilities, residential care facilities, and home and community-based settings. Funding to monitor representative payees would significantly expand DRI's ability to make sure that beneficiaries are free from abuse, neglect and financial exploitation.

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.

Below are some of the positive outcomes that Iowans experienced when DRI previously had funding to monitor representative payees:

- **An adult living with his parents and siblings received home and community based services from a local provider agency. The provider also served as his rep. payee. While examining financial records, DRI discovered receipts that appeared to be purchases that did not benefit the beneficiary. DRI reported this potential improper use of benefits to NDRN/SS through the reporting process.**
- **Beneficiaries would often describe their desire to have more control over their own money. DRI used this as an opportunity to discuss with the**

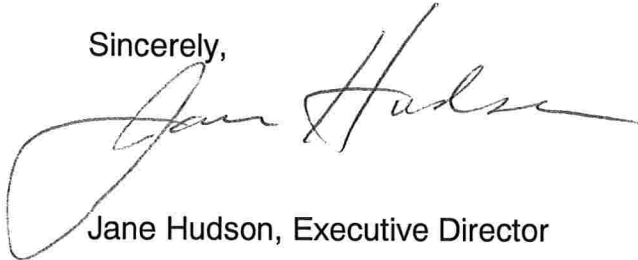
Our Mission: To defend and promote the human and legal rights of Iowans with disabilities.

beneficiary and the rep. payee options such as implementing goals for the beneficiary to create a budget or write their own checks and with support begin to take more responsibility for their finances.

- **DRI was able to inform beneficiaries of their right to ask the representative payee to provide them an accounting of how their benefits are used.**

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 be in touch with Jane Hudson, the Executive Director of Disability Rights Iowa. Thank-you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Hudson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Jane Hudson, Executive Director