

Disability Rights South Dakota

Protection and Advocacy System for South Dakota

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 South Dakota (DRSD), 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.

As a protection & advocacy organization, we do monitoring in public and private facilities for adults and adolescents. Monitoring consists of meeting with people where they live and work and listening to their concerns. A frequent complaint is the facility's failure to explain to them the expenditures of their money. These funds are often "pooled" and it is difficult for the facility to assure that everyone has received their correct amount of funds. As you can imagine, this leads to unnecessary arguments and dissent in these settings. By monitoring these issues, we can help people fully participate in achieving their goals.

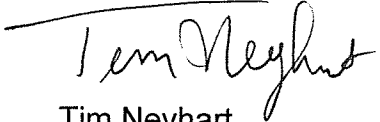
News stories, Office of Inspector General and Government Accountability Office reports, and hearings held by the House Ways and Means Committee have demonstrated the need for changes in the representative payee program. Your bipartisan legislation proposes many important and needed changes that will 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.

While addressing payee issues in a private facility, DRSD discovered that facility staff were withholding funds in an effort to coerce the person into complying with demands that she found unreasonable. It is illegal to use coercion in these settings, and this issue was resolved due to the results of the protective payee review conducted by staff from Disability Rights South Dakota.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Neyhart". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line that extends to the left.

Tim Neyhart
Executive Director
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