



Disability Rights Ohio  
200 Civic Center Drive, Suite 300  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

614-466-7264 or 800-282-9181  
FAX 614-644-1888  
TTY 614-728-2553 or 800-858-3542  
disabilityrightsohio.org

*Michael Kirkman, Esq.*  
*Executive Director*  
614-466-7264, 113  
[mkirkman@disabilityrightsohio.org](mailto:mkirkman@disabilityrightsohio.org)

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,

Disability Rights Ohio (“DRO”) writes to you to thank you for introducing and your 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.

DRO is designated by the Governor of Ohio as the federally authorized protection and advocacy system (“P&A”), with the mission to advocate for the human, civil, and legal rights of people with disabilities. Through our work, DRO has helped individuals with disabilities and their families navigate the system and advocate to ensure they are receiving the necessary services and supports.

As the P&A, Disability Rights Ohio provides much need oversight of a system that has seen misuse. The program envisioned by this bill would build on work we did under a contract with Social Security a few years ago, and provide us with the ability to engage in more vigorous monitoring for abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disabilities.

News reports, 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 in four productive and beneficial ways:

**1. Strengthening oversight of representative payees;**

This bill requires additional performance reviews, types of reviews, and improves the overall effectiveness of these reviews by requiring P&A’s (i.e. DRO) to conduct these reviews.

**2. Reducing the burden on families;**

H.R. 4547 eliminates the requirement to file annual accounting forms for representative payees who are parents or spouses living with their child who has a disability.

**3. Enhancing protections for beneficiaries; and**

This essential legislation improves information-sharing to help identify those who are in need of a representative payee, oversees performance, help improves coordination between agencies.

**4. Improving the representative payee selection.**

H.R. 4547 allows beneficiaries to make advanced designations of who they prefer to be their payee, allowing for a more person-centered approach to the program.

The Strengthening Protections for Social Security Beneficiaries Act of 2017 will help foster a stronger relationship between the P&A's like Disability Rights Ohio and the Social Security Administration ("SSA"); support SSA to meet their responsibilities; and formulate the ability for P&A's to uncover and address safety issues and other matters important to beneficiaries.

Again, we greatly appreciate your work together on this important issue culminating in the introduction of this critical legislation. We look forward to working with you and your staff to enact quickly this important and vital piece of bipartisan legislation. If you have any questions, or wish to discuss the legislation further, please contact myself or Jordan Ballinger, Policy Analyst (ext. 135).

Respectfully,



Michael Kirkman  
Executive Director