



DISABILITY RIGHTS OREGON

December 22, 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:

On behalf of Disability Rights Oregon, 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.

Disability Rights Oregon is the Protection and Advocacy System for Oregon. We have advocated for the human and legal rights of Oregonians with disabilities since 1987. We work to assure the safety of some of the most vulnerable people in society through investigations of abuse and neglect complaints, monitoring of facilities and community training.

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.

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. For example, DRO discovered both unsafe conditions and a lack of programming at a sheltered workshop that also acted as a representative payee for its clients. Our abuse and licensing complaints to the state resulted in personnel and policy changes at the facility so that the clients with intellectual disabilities were kept safe and received proper vocational training.

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 do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Joondeph', written in a cursive style.

Bob Joondeph
Executive Director
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