



February 1, 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:

The Georgia Advocacy Office, Georgia's Protection and Advocacy System (P&A) for people with disabilities, writes to thank you for introducing and supporting 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 the designated P&A in Georgia, we are an integral part of the community. In order to protect people with disabilities from harm, one of our core functions is to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect including financial exploitation of people with disabilities throughout the state. To prevent abuse and neglect, we also monitor places where people with disabilities live and receive services. Since our resources are limited, we are not able to help everyone who calls.

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 of abuse, neglect and exploitation of people with disabilities. GAO has the skills and experience to evaluate institutional representative payees, and we have provided training for individuals with payees as well as the agencies providing the service. We have resolved situations in which payees have erred in properly managing funds, preventing economic hardship and other abuses for the individuals for whom they are payees.

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.

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We greatly appreciate your work together and your leadership in introducing this critical legislation. We stand ready to work with both of you to quickly get this important legislation enacted into law. If you have any questions or need more information, please contact me, Ruby Moore, at rmoore@thegao.org or 404-885-1234.

Sincerely,



Ruby Moore
Executive Director