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**Easter Seals**

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April 29, 2015

The Honorable Sam Johnson  
Chairman  
Ways and Means Subcommittee on Social Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
B317 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Johnson:

Easter Seals is a leading non-profit organization that assists individuals with disabilities, older adults and others to reach their potential and succeed in their communities by providing and connecting them to local services and supports. We lend our support to your Promoting Opportunity for Disability Benefit Applicants Act as a way of assisting American workers who the Social Security Administration (SSA) has determined to be ineligible for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits by referring the denied applicants to community-based employment services providers that specialize in helping individuals return to work. With our support, Easter Seals also recommends that report language be added to the legislation to make clear that sharing referral information to a denied applicant does not interfere or negatively impact the applicant's ability to appeal SSA's denial decision within the standing 60-day appeals process.

SSDI assists U.S. workers who have paid into the national insurance system through their regular paychecks but who, during their work careers, have acquired what SSA describes as a "severe" disability or have a medical condition that interferes with basic work-related activities. According to SSA (*Disability Benefits*), a 20-year-old worker "has a 1-in-4 chance of becoming disabled before reaching full retirement age." Easter Seals supports efforts to help strengthen this vital insurance program to ensure benefits are available for workers who qualify for the program. Easter Seals also recognizes that some individuals whose disabilities prevented them from working in the past may again find success in the workplace based on improvements in their medical condition or as a result of comprehensive employment services, assistive technology or other supports.

The Promoting Opportunity for Disability Benefit Applicants Act would allow the SSA Commissioner to provide referral information about employment and support services, including the vocational rehabilitation program, to individuals who SSA found did not meet eligibility for SSDI benefits. Easter Seals supports sharing provider information, but we will closely monitor the process, if the legislation is enacted, to ensure the compilation of provider referral information does not significantly hinder SSA

employees' ability to meet the needs of SSDI beneficiaries and applicants and that the manner in which the referral information is shared does not have an adverse impact on a denied applicant's ability to challenge SSA's decision through the regular appeals process.

Thank you for sharing your legislation with Easter Seals. Your staff can contact me or Maynard Friesz on my staff at 202-403-8345 or [mfriesz@easterseals.com](mailto:mfriesz@easterseals.com) if they have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Beh Neas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katy Beh Neas  
Executive Vice President for Public Affairs