

Dear Chairman Johnson:

On behalf of the National Disability Leadership Alliance (NDLA) and allied organizations, we write to communicate our support for H.R. 3516. NDLA is a coalition of 14 leading national disability organizations led by people with disabilities themselves and supported by grassroots constituencies living with disabilities in all states and the District of Columbia.

In light of the recent announcement that the Obama Administration intends to utilize the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Representative Payee database to feed the names of people deemed to require assistance in managing their financial affairs -- often as a result of psychiatric, developmental, or cognitive disability -- into the National Instant Criminal Background Check system to prevent firearms purchases, our organizations have grave concerns as to the precedent this sets regarding the rights of people with disabilities. We have chosen to support H.R. 3516, which would prohibit SSA from moving forward with this ill-advised measure.

In the aftermath of the tragic shootings in San Bernardino, Newton and elsewhere, many have sought to inaccurately blame people with psychiatric disabilities for mass shootings, contrary to a wealth of evidence in the scientific literature debunking the purported link between mental health and violence. People with psychiatric disabilities deserve better than to be stigmatized by inaccurate and harmful rhetoric.

Furthermore, the representative payee system is designed for the sole purpose of allowing individuals to select a trusted person to assist them in managing their finances. The precedent of deeming an individual incompetent or unable to assert any other right as a result of representative payee status is deeply concerning and might lead to further restrictions on key rights, such as parenting, in the future. The proposed measure might also make it less likely that those who require financial assistance will be willing to utilize the SSA's representative payee system.

We urge you to move H.R. 3516 forward swiftly in order to block the upcoming rulemaking process that would allow for this ill-advised attack against the rights of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

NDLA Signatories

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL)

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

ADAPT

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

National Association of the Deaf

Little People of America

National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities
National Coalition for Mental Health Recovery
United Spinal Association
Not Dead Yet

Supporting Signatories

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
National Disability Rights Network
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
TASH
Collaboration to Promote Self-Determination
Autism Women's Network