



July 28, 2020

The Honorable Danny Davis
Chairman, Ways & Means Worker & Family Support Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable John Larson
Chairman, Ways & Means Subcommittee on Social Security
United States House of Representatives
Washington D.C., 20515

Dear Chairman Davis and Chairman Larson:

On behalf of the 1.4 million Americans we serve every year, Easterseals is writing to voice our strong support for the Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit all Americans hard, but portions of the population, namely seniors and people with disabilities, are acutely susceptible to the virus and financially vulnerable to loss of income or employment. That is why Social Security Income (SSI) benefits are a lifeline to those who relied on it prior to the pandemic, and became even more critical when the COVID-19 crisis caused widespread disruption in the United States.

When a Social Security or SSI beneficiary's circumstances change, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is required to reduce or cut benefits subject to the program rules. Prior to the pandemic, SSA would send overpayment or collections notifications. However, beginning in March, SSA suspended most work relating to reducing benefits due to the public health emergency. This was done to ensure vulnerable populations receiving benefits were not unduly harmed in the midst of the public health emergency.

Because SSA did not inform beneficiaries of the overpayments, many Americans were unknowingly receiving extra benefits. With SSA announcing it will start collecting COVID-19 payments in August 2020, Easterseals is deeply concerned that this process would put thousands of seniors and individuals with disabilities in unnecessary financial positions, especially if SSA demands individuals repay hundreds or even thousands of dollars. We are distressed this situation would disproportionately harm those in fragile financial situations, especially as we are still in the throes of this public health emergency.

The Fairness for Seniors and People with Disabilities During COVID-19 Act protects these vulnerable populations who have received SSI benefits from having to repay benefits overpaid during the COVID-19 pandemic. This common-sense proposal will protect thousands of SSI beneficiaries during this unprecedented period in history. Therefore, Easterseals urges the House of Representatives to swiftly pass this legislation.

If you have any questions, please contact Connie Garner at CGarner@Easterseals.com.

Sincerely,



Angela Williams, President and CEO
On Behalf of the Easterseals Affiliate Network

Easterseals National Office
Easterseals Alabama
Easterseals Alaska
Easterseals Arc of Northeast Indiana
Easterseals Arkansas
Easterseals Blake Foundation
Easterseals Cardinal Hill
Easterseals Central and Southeast Ohio
Easterseals Central California
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Easterseals Crossroads
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Easterseals Delaware & Maryland's Eastern Shore
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Easterseals Eastern Pennsylvania
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Easterseals Rehabilitation Center
Easterseals Rhode Island
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Easterseals UCP North Carolina & Virginia
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