



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

December 20, 2017

The Hon. Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Cochran and Frelinghuysen and Ranking Members Leahy and Lowey:

On behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Employment and Training Task Force and Social Security Task Force, the undersigned organizations write to express our strong support for the Social Security Ticket to Work program and concern regarding language included in the FY 2018 Labor-HHS appropriations report concerning that program. CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society. The Employment and Training Task Force concerns itself with public policies affecting the workforce participation of individuals with disabilities. The Social Security Task Force focuses on disability policy issues in the Social Security Act Title II disability programs and the Title XVI Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

The language in question appears in the Senate Report on the appropriations bill [Report 115-150] and reads as follows: "Disability Insurance.—The Committee recognizes that the purpose of the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program [Ticket Program] is to provide the assistance disabled beneficiaries need to return to work. The Committee is aware that the SSA OIG found that employment impacts may have been similar for beneficiaries, whether they had participated in the Ticket Program or other employment assistance programs. The Committee directs SSA to submit a report no later than 90 days after the enactment of this act determining if the Ticket Program is having the desired measurable results and if it is or is not cost effective to continue the Ticket Program."

Both task forces were ardent backers of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act [P.L. 106-170] when it was enacted in 1999 because it represented a crucial step forward in removing barriers to employment for people with disabilities receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and SSI benefits. We also supported important changes to the Ticket to Work regulations that were finalized in 2007 which improved the environment for vocational rehabilitation providers to serve beneficiaries enrolled in the program.

Although we recognize that Ticket to Work is not a panacea, we continue to be strong advocates for the program because it represents one tool that can help a person with a disability severe enough to be eligible for SSDI or SSI benefits go to or return to work. The Ticket Program is valuable because it provides disability beneficiaries with options of service providers and the ongoing supports provided to program participants for up to five years can be essential to help people to maintain employment. The effectiveness of the Ticket program continues to remain limited by other factors, however, because numerous impediments to entering or re-entering the workforce remain for people receiving SSDI and SSI benefits – not least of which is the “cash cliff” faced by those on SSDI who face immediate termination of their benefits once their earnings pass a modest income threshold and potential loss of Medicaid and its provision of employment supports due to income or assets. Nevertheless, the Ticket to Work program and the other provisions of P.L. 106-170 established a framework to offer Social Security disability beneficiaries to pursue employment and pursue economic self-sufficiency.

Just recently, SSA’s own Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support (ORDES), published some statistics on Ticket to Work’s performance in the period 2014 to 2016. According to this publication, the number of beneficiaries supported by Ticket to Work Employment Networks that have exited the benefit rolls has increased by over 60 percent during that three-year period.

Additional research and study to identify ways to improve the employment and earnings outcomes of Social Security disability program beneficiaries participating in the Ticket program would be welcome. A report back to Congress regarding the Ticket program should focus on providing Congress with solid data regarding the outcomes achieved by and costs and benefits of the Ticket program so that improvements in the program could be made based on evidence and data. We agree that it is always useful for government programs to undergo periodic evaluations to ascertain their effectiveness and to examine how those programs can be strengthened. Over the years, CCD task forces have made [numerous suggestions](#) concerning ways in which the Ticket to Work program and other Social Security work incentives can be enhanced. We encourage Congress and the Social Security Administration to work with stakeholders in examining Ticket to Work to improve the outcomes of Ticket program participants and ensure that the interests of beneficiaries seeking to return to work remain paramount.

Sincerely,

ACCSES

Allies for Independence

American Association on Health and Disability

American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)

Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)

Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)

Autism Society of America

Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

Center for Public Representation

Easterseals

National Alliance on Mental Illness

National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities

National Association of Disability Representatives
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Institute
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Industries for the Blind (NIB)
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
Paralyzed Veterans of America
The Arc of the United States
United Spinal Association

CC:

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Labor, HHS, Ed and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Labor, HHS, Ed and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Orrin Hatch
Chairman
Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chairman
Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
Ranking Member
Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy Subcommittee
Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labor Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labor Subcommittee
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Kevin Brady
Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Richard Neal
Ranking Member
House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Sam Johnson
Chairman
Social Security Subcommittee
House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable John Larson
Ranking Member
Social Security Subcommittee
House Committee on Ways and Means