



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

February 14, 2020

Representative Raul M. Grijalva
1511 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20515

Senator Sherrod Brown
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Representative Grijalva and Senator Brown:

The undersigned organizations are pleased to provide this letter of support for your bills, **H.R. 4280 and S. 2753, the *Supplemental Security Income Restoration Act of 2019***. Our organizations are all members of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD). CCD is a coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration, and inclusion of the approximately 57 million children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

When the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program was signed into law in 1972, it promised to serve as a safety net for those who (through disability or age) were unable to work and had little to no savings or other sources of income. But, because important aspects of the program have not been updated in more than 40 years, some of our country's most vulnerable citizens are living deeper in poverty today than they were then.

These bills would update the income and asset limits to better reflect reasonable assistance in today's dollars. They would increase and inflation-adjust the SSI resource limit and income exclusions, and end benefit reductions for SSI recipients who are given food or shelter at below-market rates. These changes would allow low-income senior citizens and people with disabilities to save for important needs, accept some help from friends and family, and maximize their financial stability.

The rules that disregard a portion of an individual's income when determining an individual's eligibility for SSI benefits have not changed in 47 years. Since 1972, annual cost of living adjustments have resulted in a five-fold increase in the SSI monthly benefit, but the general income exclusion has remained constant at \$20 per month, while the monthly exclusion for earnings is still \$65. The SSI Restoration Act would update the general income exclusion to \$123 per month, and the earned income exclusion to \$399 per month, as well as index these amounts for inflation going forward.

Since 1989, the asset limit has been set at \$2,000 for an individual and \$3,000 for a married couple. This unrealistic limit prevents many people from qualifying for SSI, and prevents those receiving benefits from saving for emergencies. The SSI Restoration Act would increase this limit to \$10,000 for an individual and \$20,000 for a married couple. These higher limits represent more realistic amounts for planning for emergencies and other expenses.

The SSI Restoration Act also eliminates a rule requiring a loss of some benefits for SSI beneficiaries who also receive non-cash in-kind assistance. This provision is unfair to affected individuals and has proven to be enormously difficult for the Social Security Administration to administer. Elimination of this provision would both make the program fairer and simplify its administration.

It is time to modernize the SSI program and allow it to better fulfill its purpose of reducing poverty for senior citizens and people with disabilities.

We proudly endorse H.R. 4280 and S. 2753, the *Supplemental Security Income Restoration Act*. This bill represents an important step in modernizing this long-neglected program, and we thank you for your leadership in this important legislation.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
American Council of the Blind
American Network of Community Options & Resources (ANCOR)
Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE)
Autism Society of America
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Blinded Veterans Association
Center for Public Representation
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
CommunicationFIRST
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation
Easterseals
Epilepsy Foundation
Family Voices
Jewish Federations of North America
Justice in Aging
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Alliance on Mental Illness
National Association of Disability Representatives
National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities
National Association of State Head Injury Administrators
National Disability Rights Network
National Down Syndrome Congress
SourceAmerica
Special Needs Alliance

The Arc of the United States
United Spinal Association