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The Honorable Sam Johnson, Chairman
Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
2304 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Johnson,

The executive leadership of the National Association of Disability Examiners (NADE) recently had the opportunity to discuss legislation currently pending in Congress. We would like to offer our Association's perspective on H.R. 3309. We believe that NADE's perspective is unique as described below.

Who We Are

NADE is a professional association whose purpose is to promote the art and science of disability evaluation. The majority of our members work in the state Disability Determination Service (DDS) agencies across the nation where 15,000+ employees adjudicate claims for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability benefits for the Social Security Administration (SSA). Our members constitute the "front lines" of disability evaluation. Our membership also includes personnel from SSA's Central and Regional Offices, physicians, claimant advocates, attorneys and non-attorney claimant representatives. It is the diversity of our membership, combined with our extensive program knowledge and "hands-on" experience that enables NADE to offer a perspective on disability issues that is unique.

NADE members are deeply concerned about the integrity and efficiency of the Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) disability programs. Simply stated, we believe those who are entitled to disability benefits under the law should receive them; those who are not, should not. Toward that purpose, we would like to offer the following comments regarding three pieces of current legislation that are pending before Congress.

H.R. 3309 – Social Security Online Tools Innovation Act

This legislation was introduced into Congress by you on July 19, 2017 and it is co-sponsored by Representative Tom Reed of New York. This legislation was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means. The purpose of this legislation is stated below:

- ❖ To require the Commissioner of Social Security to make publicly available online tools to allow individuals eligible for disability benefits to assess the impact of earnings on the individual's eligibility for, and amount of, benefits received through Federal and State benefit programs.

- ❖ The effective date of H. R. 3309 would be no later than two years after its enactment.

NADE supports this legislation. One of our Association's "Top Issues" for 2018, outlined in the documents we provided to Congress earlier this year, calls for SSA to continue its introduction and enhancement of additional customer service improvements. We believe one area in which this objective can be attained is in providing additional online tools for those who are seeking disability benefits and for those who are already receiving disability benefits. It is important that SSA recognize the positive impact such availability can have for those individuals who seek specific information with regard to how certain actions and earnings can impact future benefits. It is even more critical that SSA increase and enhance the availability to such online tools since the Agency has experienced a reduction in personnel in recent years. This reduction has negatively impacted the ability of the agency to provide in-person service and has resulted in the closure of some SSA Field Offices and reduced operating hours for others. Yet, the need for those receiving disability benefits, and for those seeking disability benefits, to find answers to their questions is still great.

By making available such online tools as the ability to discover the potential impact of earnings on an individual's eligibility for disability benefits, SSA can support its mission of providing the level of customer service the American public has come to expect from the Agency. Consequently, NADE supports this legislation.

NADE recognizes that budget resources are a driving force in SSA's ability to administer the programs that it does and many issues are placed on the so-called "back burner" when there is an insufficient availability of resources to move the issues forward. However, the expected costs of providing access to these online tools should be negligible and would greatly enhance the ability of Social Security to meet its obligation to serve the American public. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our perspective on this legislation further. Thank you.

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