



Easter Seals

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June 27, 2012

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Ranking Member, Social Security Subcommittee
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Becerra:

I am writing in support of your legislative efforts to continue the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) and Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) programs at the Social Security Administration (SSA).

WIPA and PABSS provide Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities with access to reliable work incentive and benefits information that can help lead to increased employment and decreased reliability on public benefits. Four Easter Seals affiliates provide work and benefits counseling through WIPA to veterans, transition-to-work aged youth, and other Social Security beneficiaries who are interested in entering or returning to the workforce. Through the WIPA program, Easter Seals affiliates have helped thousands of individuals across the country, including many who are now working, paying taxes and improving their futures.

SSA has taken steps to wind down these programs by informing current WIPA and PABSS grantees to stop taking new clients and to finish their work with existing clients. Service disruption will further discourage beneficiaries from working – the very problem these programs were designed by Congress to address. In addition, gaps in service will result in the loss of experienced work incentive staff members that are specially trained on the complexities of the current work incentive system and rules. Shutting down and reopening WIPA services will cost far more in terms of dollars and lost expertise than a simple continuation. While Easter Seals believes SSA has the authority and funding to continue WIPA and PABSS through the end of fiscal year 2012, we strongly support your legislative fix to make it absolutely clear and to avoid future shutdowns of these programs.

Easter Seals applauds your efforts to continue these important programs for people with disabilities. We look forward to working with you to move the bill through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katy Beh Neas".

Katy Beh Neas
Senior Vice President, Government Relations