



National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs

August 1, 2017

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Wyden:

The National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs (NASOP), representing the 53 state-level organizations dedicated to improving quality of care and quality of life for residents of long-term care facilities, is pleased to support your legislation, S. 959 the Protection of Social Security Benefits Restoration Act. NASOP believes that this legislation would improve the quality of life of long-term care facility residents who have their Social Security benefits garnished to repay student loans.

As you are aware, the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program identifies, investigates and resolves complaints made by or on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities that affect their health, safety, welfare, or rights. Representatives of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman frequently hear from residents about the insufficiency of their personal needs allowance, the small amount of money Medicaid nursing home residents are allowed to keep from their personal monthly income. The personal needs allowance in some states is as low as \$30.00 a month. According to AARP, 65 percent of nursing home residents are supported primarily by Medicaid. By any measure, most residents have little to no savings.

Further impoverishment of residents, through the current practice of garnishing Social Security benefits to repay student loans, is mean-spirited and inconsistent with the purpose of the Social Security Act. Your legislation would re-establish the strong protections in the Social Security Act, and thus ensure that all beneficiaries will once again receive full benefits as originally intended.

NASOP applauds your vision and efforts to improve the quality of life of all older Americans, especially those living in long-term care facilities. NASOP enthusiastically supports your efforts and this important consumer protection legislation.

Sincerely,

Joseph Rodrigues, Chair
NASOP Advocacy Committee

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