



April 21, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

Social Security Works is extremely concerned that millions of Social Security beneficiaries will not receive the immediate emergency economic relief that you intended. We urge you to take all necessary measures to ensure that these most vulnerable of Americans receive their desperately needed payments immediately and automatically.

As you may know, the Internal Revenue Service [issued an alert](#) yesterday which states that Social Security beneficiaries who have insufficient income to pay income tax and who have dependents will not receive the \$500 emergency payments for those dependents until 2021, unless they file information with the IRS no later than noon Eastern Time (9am Pacific Time) tomorrow, Wednesday, April 22. Not only is such a short deadline absurd, the Social Security Administration already has the information that is being requested. Consequently, the filing is unnecessary.

The *CARES Act* you just passed is intended to provide emergency payments as quickly as possible to the American people suffering from the pandemic and the resulting economic collapse. Over 64 million of those for whom the relief is intended are Social Security beneficiaries, primarily people who are most at risk of COVID-19 because of their age or disabilities.

To ensure that those more than 64 million Social Security beneficiaries receive those emergency payments automatically and quickly, you authorized the Social Security Administration to share data with the Treasury Department, the agency in charge of the payments.

At first, the Trump administration informed the lowest-income Social Security beneficiaries, those who have too little income to file income tax returns, that, instead of getting their payments automatically, they would have to provide the government with information the government already has. After enormous pushback from Congress and Social Security advocates, the Trump administration reversed course.

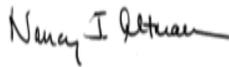
Now, those same Social Security beneficiaries have only one day to prevent having a portion of those payments – the \$500 payments for dependent children – delayed until 2021! The IRS is requiring that, to avoid that delay, beneficiaries have to go online – notwithstanding that many of them do not have computers or internet service and are supposed to be sheltering in place – to provide the government with information that it already has. Indeed, every month, the Social Security Administration makes monthly payments to those dependent children. It knows their ages, on whom they are dependent, their Social Security Numbers and their bank information.

Since the Trump administration already has the information it is seeking, it should pay these benefits without putting additional burdens on Social Security beneficiaries.

Around 15 to 20 million Social Security beneficiaries have almost no other income and likely don't file taxes. Around 4.1 million children received Social Security benefits in March 2020. The delayed payments are likely to equal well over \$1 billion desperately needed by American families, often grandfamilies – grandparents caring for grandchildren. The children being denied the emergency payments are children whose parents have died or become disabled.

We encourage Congress to push the Trump administration to allow for automatic dependent relief payments to Social Security beneficiaries regardless of whether they have filed a tax return. We hope your effort will force the IRS to quickly reverse its guidance and act swiftly to support American families and our nation's economy by sending automatic payments to every eligible American. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Nancy J. Altman  
President



Alex Lawson  
Executive Director