

From: Congressman Kweisi Mfume <MD07.noreply@mail.house.gov> To: Ryan.Lawrence@mail.house.gov Subject: Supporting Blind Americans Professional Development - Co-leading Bipartisan Legislation with Rep. Sessions Date: Mon, 22 Jul 2024 15:14:19 -0400 <meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html; charset=utf-8"><body><!DOCTYPE HTML PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd"><html><head>

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Dear

Constituent,

Recently,

[Congressman Pete Sessions](https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/iqClickTrk.aspx?&cid=MD07KM&crop=15781QQQ1) (R-TX-17) and I announced that we have introduced H.R. 8878, the **Blind Americans Return to Work Act**, which is bipartisan legislation that would allow blind Americans to achieve their full earnings potential.



Title II of the Social Security Act provides that disability benefits paid to blind beneficiaries are eliminated if the beneficiary exceeds a monthly earnings limit. This earnings limit, often called the "earnings cliff," is in effect a penalty imposed on blind Americans when they work.

For example, [the earnings limit in 2024 for a blind person is \\$2,590 per month](https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/iqClickTrk.aspx?&cid=MD07KM&crop=15781QQQ1). If a blind person earns more than that threshold, even by just one dollar, they are engaged in substantial gainful activity (SGA).

Under the current law, any individual engaged in SGA is not entitled to ANY Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. This means that **if a blind person earns just one dollar over the earnings limit, all benefits are lost.**

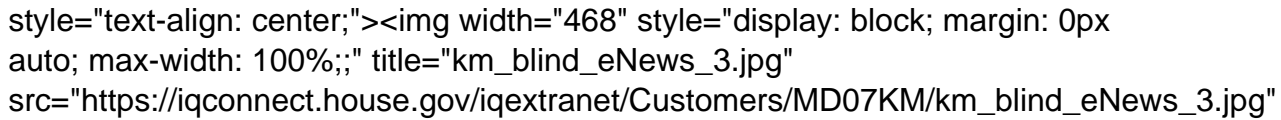


The **Blind Americans Return to Work Act** will [eliminate the earnings cliff by instituting a pilot program establishing a gradual two-for-one phase-out of SSDI benefits with earnings over the SGA limit](https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/iqClickTrk.aspx?&cid=MD07KM&crop=15781QQQ1).

In other words, for every two dollars a blind worker earns above the SGA threshold, their benefits amount will be reduced by one dollar.

12pt;">With a phase-out model, blind workers will always be better off striving to earn as much as possible, which will facilitate the transition of those workers out of the SSDI system as benefits are gradually reduced.

Through this model, blind Americans will never lose by working. As an added benefit, fewer workers will be earning SSDI benefits and instead be paying into the Social Security Trust Fund, which means a more balanced Trust Fund in time.



Under the proposed system in this legislation, the SSDI program will become less complicated. The bill would also make SSDI rules more similar to that of the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which will result in less confusion, and the incentive for blind people to return to work will be consistent and clear.

There should not be any impairment or impediment that prevents blind and visually impaired individuals from achieving their professional dreams.

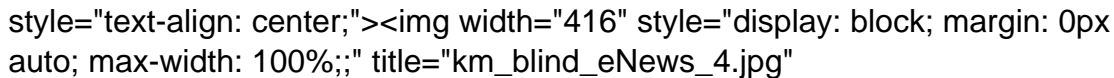
This bipartisan legislation is crucial as it would correct a roadblock in current law that forces blind and visually impaired Americans to choose between their needed benefits and their own professional development.

I want to thank my colleague,

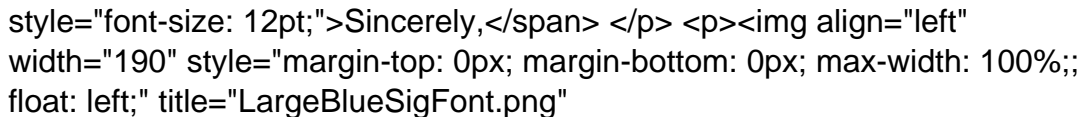
<https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/iqClickTrk.aspx?&cid=MD07KM&crop=15781QQQ1>, for spearheading our bipartisan legislation to ensure blind or visually impaired individuals no longer have to turn down a promotion or raise in order to avoid losing the entirety of the benefits they rely on.

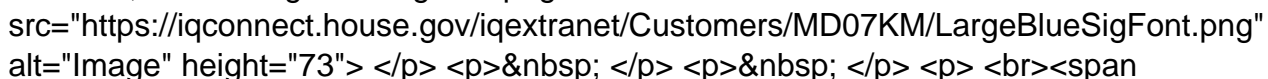
Our legislation is endorsed by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) and you can read the bill text

[HERE](https://iqconnect.house.gov/iqextranet/iqClickTrk.aspx?&cid=MD07KM&crop=15781QQQ1).



Sincerely,





Kweisi Mfume

Member of Congress

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