

January 24, 2024

Dear Members of the Committee:

As a client represented by the law firm in my Social Security claim, I wish to express my support for the initiative aimed at obtaining free access to medical records for attorneys handling disability claims in the state of Maryland. The process I underwent highlights the critical need for such advocacy.

I commenced the filing for Social Security benefits in April 2021, and it proved to be a prolonged journey marked by multiple appeals and denials. Recognizing the complexities involved, my attorney diligently pursued a hearing after facing persistent challenges. Given the protracted nature of the process and the dire financial situation I found myself in, my attorney sought an expedited hearing, which eventually led to the resolution of my case in front of an Administrative Judge in March 2023.

Throughout this extensive process, my living situation and financial stability underwent a profound transformation. The absence of income or employment during the entire duration forced me to deplete any savings I had to stay afloat, and I teetered on the brink of eviction due to the lack of income.

While I possess knowledge on obtaining medical records independently, I learned the importance of meticulous record-keeping. Maintaining a detailed list of providers, reasons for visits, along with dates, phone numbers, and addresses proved crucial when navigating the process of requesting medical records.

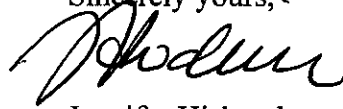
Attempting to handle this independently, especially dealing with multiple providers, would have been an overwhelming task. The time-consuming nature of the process, combined with limited resources, further heightened the challenges associated with obtaining medical records on my own.

Engaging an attorney for my Social Security claim was a pivotal decision. The complex nature of the filing process and the intricacies involved in presenting a compelling case necessitated the expertise of legal professionals. Having initially filed on my own, I quickly realized the necessity of legal representation to ensure the attention my claim deserved. Hiring an attorney proved crucial, especially in the face of initial and continuous denials, ensuring the pursuit of the maximum benefits entitled to me.

The financial burden associated with reimbursing medical records expenses, whether I won or lost my case, would be substantial. This is primarily due to the extreme financial hardship I faced during the proceedings and the prolonged period without income, leaving me struggling to meet basic expenses. Reimbursement may not be feasible or affordable for many individuals who, like myself, have experienced years without income, leading to a significant fall behind in expenses and potential further hardship.

In conclusion, I affirm the accuracy of this statement, emphasizing the importance of securing free access to medical records for attorneys in Maryland involved in disability claims.

Sincerely yours, ✓

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Hishmeh", written in a cursive style.

Jennifer Hishmeh