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6TH DISTRICT, OHIO

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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January 31, 2008

Mr. Michael J. Astrue
Commissioner of Social Security
6401 Security Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Commissioner Astrue:

I am writing to inquire about a report that aired on the CBS Evening News on January 15, 2008. The report detailed allegations that Social Security examiners have been encouraged to deny disability claims. According to CBS News, nearly three dozen former examiners in 14 states, including Ohio, reported that there is a system-wide "culture to deny" disability claims.

CBS News reported that two-thirds of all applicants denied last year—nearly a million people—gave up after being turned down the first time. According to Trisha Cardillo, a former examiner in Ohio who was featured in the profile, Social Security examiners "know a certain percentage of people, once denied, will never file an appeal."

I am shocked and disheartened to hear such news. It is unacceptable that my constituents may have been denied the benefits to which they are entitled simply because an examiner has a quota to meet. Disability benefits act as a crucial safety-net, helping injured American workers bridge serious gaps in employment. I would appreciate your prompt response to these allegations and more information on steps the Social Security Administration is taking to ensure the fair and timely consideration of claims. If you have any questions please contact Joan Gregory in my office at 202-225-5705.

Sincerely,

Charles Wilson
Member of Congress