

Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will now be 2 minutes of debate equally divided prior to a vote on confirmation.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to yield back 2 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I yield back our time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Sarah Bloom Raskin, of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table.

The President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT OF 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and proceed to consideration of S. 1086, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1086) to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

The Senate proceeded to consider the bill which had been reported from the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following:

S. 1086

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014".

SEC. 2. SHORT TITLE AND PURPOSES.

Section 658A of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9801 note) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 658A. SHORT TITLE AND PURPOSES.

"(a) SHORT TITLE.—This subchapter may be cited as the 'Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990'.

"(b) PURPOSES.—The purposes of this subchapter are—

"(1) to allow each State maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within that State;

"(2) to promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care that best suits their family's needs;

"(3) to assist States in providing high-quality child care services to parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance;

"(4) to assist States in improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training, and oversight standards established in this subchapter and in State law (including regulations);

"(5) to improve school readiness by having children, families, and child care providers en-

gage in activities, in child care settings, that are developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate for the children and that promote children's language and literacy and mathematics skills, social and emotional development, physical health and development, and approaches to learning;

"(6) to encourage States to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and to promote involvement by parents and family members in the education of their children in child care settings;

"(7) to increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings; and

"(8) to improve the coordination and delivery of early childhood education and care (including child care)."

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

Section 658B of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858) is amended by striking "subchapter" and all that follows, and inserting "subchapter, such sums as may be necessary for each of fiscal years 2015 through 2020."

SEC. 4. LEAD AGENCY.

(a) DESIGNATION.—Section 658D(a) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858b(a)) is amended—

(1) by striking "chief executive officer" and inserting "Governor"; and

(2) by striking "designate" and all that follows and inserting "designate an agency (which may be an appropriate collaborative agency), or establish a joint interagency office, that complies with the requirements of subsection (b) to serve as the lead agency for the State under this subchapter."

(b) COLLABORATION WITH TRIBES.—Section 658D(b)(1) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858b(b)(1)) is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (C), by striking "and" at the end;

(2) in subparagraph (D), by striking the period and inserting "; and"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

"(E) at the option of an Indian tribe or tribal organization in the State, collaborate and coordinate with such Indian tribe or tribal organization in the development of the State plan."

SEC. 5. APPLICATION AND PLAN.

(a) PERIOD.—Section 658E(b) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858c(b)) is amended, by striking "2-year" and inserting "3-year".

(b) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.—Section 658E(c) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858c(c)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting "or established" after "designated";

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in subparagraph (B), by inserting a comma after "care of such providers";

(B) by striking subparagraphs (D) through (H); and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

"(D) MONITORING AND INSPECTION REPORTS.—The plan shall include a certification that the State, not later than 1 year after the State has in effect the policies and practices described in subparagraph (K)(i), will make public by electronic means, in a consumer-friendly and easily accessible format, organized by provider, the results of monitoring and inspection reports, including those due to major substantiated complaints about failure to comply with this subchapter and State child care policies, as well as the number of deaths, serious injuries, and instances of substantiated child abuse that occurred in child care settings each year, for eligible child care providers within the State. The results shall also include information on the date of such an inspection and, where applicable, information on corrective action taken.

"(E) CONSUMER EDUCATION INFORMATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State will collect and disseminate (which dissemination may be done, except as otherwise specified in this subparagraph, through resource and referral organizations or other means as determined by the State) to parents of eligible children and the general public—

"(i) information that will promote informed child care choices and that concerns—

"(I) the availability of child care services provided through programs authorized under this subchapter and, if feasible, other child care services and other programs provided in the State for which the family may be eligible;

"(II) if available, information about the quality of providers, including information from a Quality Rating and Improvement System;

"(III) information, made available through a State website, describing the State process for licensing child care providers, the State processes for conducting background checks, and monitoring and inspections, of child care providers, and the offenses that prevent individuals and entities from serving as child care providers in the State;

"(IV) the availability of assistance to obtain child care services;

"(V) other programs for which families that receive child care services for which financial assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter may be eligible, including the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families established under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.), Head Start and Early Head Start programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), the program carried out under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (42 U.S.C. 8621 et seq.), the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.), the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children established under section 17 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1786), the child and adult care food program established under section 17 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1766), and the Medicaid and State children's health insurance programs under titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq., 1397aa et seq.);

"(VI) programs carried out under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.); and

"(VII) research and best practices concerning children's development, including language and cognitive development, development of early language and literacy and mathematics skills, social and emotional development, meaningful parent and family engagement, and physical health and development (particularly healthy eating and physical activity);

"(ii) information on developmental screenings, including—

"(I) information on existing (as of the date of submission of the application containing the plan) resources and services the State can deploy, including the coordinated use of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program under the Medicaid program carried out under title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.) and developmental screening services available under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.), in conducting developmental screenings and providing referrals to services, when appropriate, for children who receive assistance under this subchapter; and

"(II) a description of how a family or eligible child care provider may utilize the resources and services described in subclause (I) to obtain developmental screenings for children who receive assistance under this subchapter who may be at risk for cognitive or other developmental delays, which may include social, emotional, physical, or linguistic delays; and

“(iii) information, for parents receiving assistance under the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) and low-income parents, about eligibility for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter.

“(F) COMPLIANCE WITH STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall include a certification that the State involved has in effect licensing requirements applicable to child care services provided within the State, and provide a detailed description of such requirements and of how such requirements are effectively enforced.

“(ii) LICENSE EXEMPTION.—If the State uses funding received under this subchapter to support a child care provider that is exempt from the corresponding licensing requirements described in clause (i), the plan shall include a description stating why such licensing exemption does not endanger the health, safety, or development of children who receive services from child care providers who are exempt from such requirements.

“(iii) REQUESTS FOR RELIEF.—As described in section 658(d), a State may request relief from a provision of Federal law other than this subchapter that might conflict with a requirement of this subchapter, including a licensing requirement.

“(G) TRAINING REQUIREMENTS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall describe the training requirements that are in effect within the State that are designed to enable child care providers to promote the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children and that are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter in the State.

“(ii) REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall provide an assurance that such training requirements—

“(I) provide a set of workforce and competency standards for child care providers that provide services described in clause (i);

“(II) are developed in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)));

“(III) include an evidence-based training framework that is designed to promote children’s learning and development and school readiness and to improve child outcomes, including school readiness;

“(IV) incorporate knowledge and application of the State’s early learning and developmental guidelines (where applicable), and the State’s child development and health standards; and

“(V) to the extent practicable, are appropriate for a population of children that includes—

“(aa) different age groups (such as infants, toddlers, and preschoolers);

“(bb) English learners;

“(cc) children with disabilities; and

“(dd) Native Americans, including Indians, as the term is defined in section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 450b) (including Alaska Natives within the meaning of that term), and Native Hawaiians (as defined in section 7207 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7517)).

“(iii) PROGRESSION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.—In developing the requirements, the State shall develop a statewide progression of professional development designed to improve the skills and knowledge of the workforce—

“(I) which may include the acquisition of course credit in postsecondary education or of a credential, aligned with the framework; and

“(II) which shall be accessible to providers supported through Indian tribes or tribal organizations that receive assistance under this subchapter.

“(iv) ALIGNMENT.—The State shall engage the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood

Education and Care, and may engage institutions of higher education (as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002)), and other training providers in aligning training opportunities with the State’s training framework.

“(v) CREDENTIALS.—The Secretary shall not require an individual or entity that provides child care services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter to acquire a credential to provide such services. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit a State from requiring a credential.

“(H) CHILD-TO-PROVIDER RATIO STANDARDS.—

“(i) STANDARDS.—The plan shall describe child care standards, for child care for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter, appropriate to the type of child care setting involved, that address—

“(I) group size limits for specific age populations;

“(II) the appropriate ratio between the number of children and the number of providers, in terms of the age of the children in child care, as determined by the State; and

“(III) required qualifications for such providers.

“(ii) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary may offer guidance to States on child-to-provider ratios described in clause (i) according to setting and age group but shall not require that States maintain specific child-to-provider ratios for providers who receive assistance under this subchapter.

“(I) HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that there are in effect within the State, under State or local law, requirements designed to protect the health and safety of children that are applicable to child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter. Such requirements—

“(i) shall relate to matters including health and safety topics (including prevention of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma) consisting of—

“(I) the prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization) and the establishment of a grace period that allows homeless children to receive services under this subchapter while their families are taking any necessary action to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements;

“(II) handwashing and universal health precautions;

“(III) the administration of medication, consistent with standards for parental consent;

“(IV) the prevention of and response to emergencies due to food and other allergic reactions;

“(V) prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleeping practices;

“(VI) sanitary methods of food handling;

“(VII) building and physical premises safety;

“(VIII) emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster, or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1));

“(IX) the handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of biocontaminants;

“(X) identification of and protection from hazards that can cause bodily injury such as electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic;

“(XI) for providers that offer transportation, if applicable, appropriate precautions in transporting children;

“(XII) first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation; and

“(XIII) minimum health and safety training, to be completed pre-service or during an orientation period, appropriate to the provider setting involved that addresses each of the requirements relating to matters described in subclauses (I) through (XII); and

“(ii) may include requirements relating to nutrition, access to physical activity, or any other subject area determined by the State to be necessary to promote child development or to protect children’s health and safety.

“(J) COMPLIANCE WITH STATE AND LOCAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that procedures are in effect to ensure that child care providers within the State, that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter, comply with all applicable State and local health and safety requirements as described in subparagraph (I).

“(K) ENFORCEMENT OF LICENSING AND OTHER REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS.—

“(i) CERTIFICATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State, not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, shall have in effect policies and practices, applicable to licensing or regulating child care providers that provide services for which assistance is made available in accordance with this subchapter and the facilities of those providers, that—

“(I) ensure that individuals who are hired as licensing inspectors in the State are qualified to inspect those child care providers and facilities and have received training in related health and safety requirements, child development, child abuse prevention and detection, program management, and relevant law enforcement;

“(II) require licensing inspectors (or qualified inspectors designated by the lead agency) of those child care providers and facilities to perform inspections, with—

“(aa) not less than 1 preclosure inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards, of each such child care provider and facility in the State; and

“(bb) not less than annually, an inspection (which shall be unannounced) of each such child care provider and facility in the State for compliance with all child care licensing standards, which shall include an inspection for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards (although inspectors may or may not inspect for compliance with all 3 standards at the same time); and

“(III) require the ratio of licensing inspectors to such child care providers and facilities in the State to—

“(aa) be maintained at a level sufficient to enable the State to conduct inspections of such child care providers and facilities on a timely basis in accordance with Federal and State law; and

“(bb) be consistent with research findings and best practices.

“(ii) CONSTRUCTION.—The Secretary may offer guidance to a State, if requested by the State, on a research-based minimum standard regarding ratios described in clause (i)(III) and provide technical assistance to the State on meeting the minimum standard within a reasonable time period, but shall not prescribe a particular ratio.

“(L) COMPLIANCE WITH CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—The plan shall include a certification that child care providers within the State will comply with the child abuse reporting requirements of section 106(b)(2)(B)(i) of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (42 U.S.C. 5106a(b)(2)(B)(i)).

“(M) MEETING THE NEEDS OF CERTAIN POPULATIONS.—The plan shall describe how the State will develop and implement strategies (which may include the provision of compensation at higher payment rates and bonuses to child care providers, the provision of direct contracts or grants to community-based organizations, or other means determined by the State) to increase the supply and improve the quality of child care for—

“(i) children in underserved areas;

“(ii) infants and toddlers;

“(iii) children with disabilities, as defined by the State; and

“(iv) children who receive care during non-traditional hours.

“(N) PROTECTION FOR WORKING PARENTS.—

“(i) MINIMUM PERIOD.—

“(I) 12-MONTH PERIOD.—The plan shall demonstrate that each child who receives assistance under this subchapter in the State will be considered to meet all eligibility requirements for such assistance and will receive such assistance, for not less than 12 months before the State re-determines the eligibility of the child under this subchapter, regardless of a temporary change in the ongoing status of the child’s parent as working or attending a job training or educational program or a change in family income for the child’s family, if that family income does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size.

“(II) FLUCTUATIONS IN EARNINGS.—The plan shall demonstrate how the State’s processes for initial determination and redetermination of such eligibility take into account irregular fluctuations in earnings.

“(ii) REDETERMINATION PROCESS.—The plan shall describe the procedures and policies that are in place to ensure that working parents (especially parents in families receiving assistance under the program of block grants to States for temporary assistance for needy families under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)) are not required to unduly disrupt their employment in order to comply with the State’s requirements for redetermination of eligibility for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter.

“(iii) PERIOD BEFORE TERMINATION.—At the option of the State, the plan shall demonstrate that the State will not terminate assistance provided to carry out this subchapter based on a factor consisting of a parent’s loss of work or cessation of attendance at a job training or educational program for which the family was receiving the assistance, without continuing the assistance for a reasonable period of time, of not less than 3 months, after such loss or cessation in order for the parent to engage in a job search and resume work, or resume attendance at a job training or educational program, as soon as possible.

“(iv) GRADUATED PHASEOUT OF CARE.—The plan shall describe the policies and procedures that are in place to allow for provision of continued assistance to carry out this subchapter, at the beginning of a new eligibility period under clause (i)(I), for children of parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program and whose family income exceeds the State’s income limit to initially qualify for such assistance, if the family income for the family involved does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size.

“(O) COORDINATION WITH OTHER PROGRAMS.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall describe how the State, in order to expand accessibility and continuity of quality early childhood education and care, and assist children enrolled in pre-kindergarten, Early Head Start, or Head Start programs to receive full-day services, will coordinate the services supported to carry out this subchapter with—

“(I) programs carried out under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), including the Early Head Start programs carried out under section 645A of that Act (42 U.S.C. 9840a);

“(II) programs carried out under part A of title I, and part B of title IV, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 6311 et seq., 7171 et seq.);

“(III) programs carried out under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.);

“(IV) the maternal, infant, and early childhood home visiting programs authorized under section 511 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 711), as added by section 2951 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (Public Law 111-148);

“(V) State, Indian tribe or tribal organization, and locally funded early childhood education and care programs;

“(VI) programs serving homeless children and services of local educational agency liaisons for homeless children and youths designated under subsection (g)(1)(J)(ii) of section 722 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)); and

“(VII) other Federal programs supporting early childhood education and care activities, and, where applicable, child care programs funded through State veterans affairs offices.

“(ii) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in clause (i) shall be construed to affect the priority of children described in clause (i) to receive full-day prekindergarten or Head Start program services.

“(P) PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS.—The plan shall demonstrate how the State encourages partnerships among State agencies, other public agencies, Indian tribes and tribal organizations, and private entities to leverage existing service delivery systems (as of the date of the submission of the application containing the plan) for early childhood education and care and to increase the supply and quality of child care services for children who are less than 13 years of age, such as by implementing voluntary shared services alliance models.

“(Q) PRIORITY FOR LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS.—The plan shall describe the process the State proposes to use, with respect to investments made to increase access to programs providing high-quality early childhood education and care, to give priority for those investments to children of families in areas that have significant concentrations of poverty and unemployment and that do not have such programs.

“(R) CONSULTATION.—The plan shall include a certification that the State has developed the plan in consultation with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care designated or established pursuant to section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)).

“(S) PAYMENT PRACTICES.—The plan shall include a certification that the payment practices of child care providers in the State that serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter reflect generally accepted payment practices of child care providers in the State that serve children who do not receive assistance under this subchapter, so as to provide stability of funding and encourage more child care providers to serve children who receive assistance under this subchapter.

“(T) EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDELINES.—

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall include an assurance that the State will develop or implement early learning and developmental guidelines that are appropriate for children from birth through entry into kindergarten, describing what such children should know and be able to do, and covering the essential domains of early childhood education and care and early childhood development for use statewide by child care providers. Such child care providers shall—

“(I) be licensed or regulated under State law; and

“(II) not be a relative of all children for whom the provider provides child care services.

“(ii) ALIGNMENT.—The guidelines shall be research-based, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with State standards for education in kindergarten through grade 3.

“(iii) PROHIBITION ON USE OF FUNDS.—The plan shall include an assurance that funds received by the State to carry out this subchapter will not be used to develop or implement an assessment for children that—

“(I) will be the sole basis for a child care provider being determined to be ineligible to participate in the program carried out under this subchapter;

“(II) will be used as the primary or sole basis to provide a reward or sanction for an individual provider;

“(III) will be used as the primary or sole method for assessing program effectiveness; or

“(IV) will be used to deny eligibility to participate in the program carried out under this subchapter.

“(iv) EXCEPTIONS.—Nothing in this subchapter shall preclude the State from using a single assessment (if appropriate) for children for—

“(I) supporting learning or improving a classroom environment;

“(II) targeting professional development to a provider;

“(III) determining the need for health, mental health, disability, developmental delay, or family support services;

“(IV) obtaining information for the quality improvement process at the State level; or

“(V) conducting a program evaluation for the purposes of providing program improvement and parent information.

“(v) NO FEDERAL CONTROL.—Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize an officer or employee of the Federal Government to—

“(I) mandate, direct, or control a State’s early learning and developmental guidelines, developed in accordance with this section;

“(II) establish any criterion that specifies, defines, or prescribes the standards or measures that a State uses to establish, implement, or improve—

“(aa) early learning and developmental guidelines, or early learning standards, assessments, or accountability systems; or

“(bb) alignment of early learning and developmental guidelines with State standards for education in kindergarten through grade 3; or

“(III) require a State to submit such standards or measures for review.”;

(3) in paragraph (3)—

(A) in subparagraph (A), by striking “as required under” and inserting “in accordance with”;

(B) in subparagraph (B)—

(i) by striking “The State” and inserting the following:

“(i) IN GENERAL.—The State”;

(ii) by striking “and any other activity that the State deems appropriate to realize any of the goals specified in paragraphs (2) through (5) of section 658A(b)” and inserting “activities that improve access to child care services, including use of procedures to permit immediate enrollment (after the initial eligibility determination and after a child is determined to be eligible) of homeless children while required documentation is obtained, training and technical assistance on identifying and serving homeless children and their families, and specific outreach to homeless families, and any other activity that the State determines to be appropriate to meet the purposes of this subchapter (which may include an activity described in clause (ii))”; and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(ii) CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL SYSTEM.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—A State may use amounts described in clause (i) to establish or support a system of local or regional child care resource and referral organizations that is coordinated, to the extent determined appropriate by the State, by a statewide public or private nonprofit, community-based or regionally based, lead child care resource and referral organization.

“(II) LOCAL OR REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.—The local or regional child care resource and referral organizations supported as described in subclause (I) shall—

“(aa) provide parents in the State with consumer education information referred to in paragraph (2)(E) (except as otherwise provided in that paragraph), concerning the full range of child care options, analyzed by provider, including child care provided during nontraditional

hours and through emergency child care centers, in their political subdivisions or regions;

“(bb) to the extent practicable, work directly with families who receive assistance under this subchapter to offer the families support and assistance, using information described in item (aa), to make an informed decision about which child care providers they will use, in an effort to ensure that the families are enrolling their children in high-quality care;

“(cc) collect and analyze data on the coordination of services and supports, including services under section 619 and part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.), for children with disabilities (as defined in section 602 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1401));

“(dd) collect and analyze data on the supply of and demand for child care in political subdivisions or regions within the State and submit such data and analysis to the State;

“(ee) work to establish partnerships with public agencies and private entities to increase the supply and quality of child care services in the State; and

“(ff) as appropriate, coordinate their activities with the activities of the State lead agency and local agencies that administer funds made available in accordance with this subchapter.”;

(C) in subparagraph (D)—

(i) by striking “1997 through 2002” and inserting “2015 through 2020”; and

(ii) by striking “families described in paragraph (2)(H)” and inserting “families with children described in clause (i), (ii), (iii), or (iv) of paragraph (2)(M)”;

(D) by adding at the end the following:

“(E) **DIRECT SERVICES.**—From amounts provided to a State for a fiscal year to carry out this subchapter, the State shall—

“(i) reserve the minimum amount required to be reserved under section 658G, and the funds for costs described in subparagraph (C); and

“(ii) from the remainder, use not less than 70 percent to fund direct services (provided by the State) in accordance with paragraph (2)(A).”;

(4) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

“(4) **PAYMENT RATES.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The State plan shall certify that payment rates for the provision of child care services for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter are sufficient to ensure equal access for eligible children to child care services that are comparable to child care services in the State or substate area involved that are provided to children whose parents are not eligible to receive assistance under this subchapter or to receive child care assistance under any other Federal or State program and shall provide a summary of the facts relied on by the State to determine that such rates are sufficient to ensure such access.

“(B) **SURVEY.**—The State plan shall—

“(i) demonstrate that the State has, after consulting with the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care designated or established in section 642B(b)(1)(A)(i) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i)), local child care program administrators, local child care resource and referral agencies, and other appropriate entities, developed and conducted (not earlier than 2 years before the date of the submission of the application containing the State plan) a statistically valid and reliable survey of the market rates for child care services in the State (that reflects variations in the cost of child care services by geographic area, type of provider, and age of child);

“(ii) demonstrate that the State prepared a detailed report containing the results of the State market rates survey conducted pursuant to clause (i), and made the results of the survey widely available (not later than 30 days after the completion of such survey) through periodic means, including posting the results on the Internet;

“(iii) describe how the State will set payment rates for child care services, for which assist-

ance is provided in accordance with this subchapter—

“(I) in accordance with the results of the market rates survey conducted pursuant to clause (i);

“(II) taking into consideration the cost of providing higher quality child care services than were provided under this subchapter before the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014; and

“(III) without, to the extent practicable, reducing the number of families in the State receiving such assistance to carry out this subchapter, relative to the number of such families on the date of enactment of that Act; and

“(iv) describe how the State will provide for timely payment for child care services provided in accordance with this subchapter.

“(C) **CONSTRUCTION.**—

“(i) **NO PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.**—Nothing in this paragraph shall be construed to create a private right of action.

“(ii) **NO PROHIBITION OF CERTAIN DIFFERENT RATES.**—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prevent a State from differentiating the payment rates described in subparagraph (B)(iii) on the basis of such factors as—

“(I) geographic location of child care providers (such as location in an urban or rural area);

“(II) the age or particular needs of children (such as the needs of children with disabilities and children served by child protective services);

“(III) whether the providers provide child care during weekend and other nontraditional hours; or

“(IV) the State’s determination that such differentiated payment rates are needed to enable a parent to choose child care that is of high quality.”; and

(5) in paragraph (5), by inserting “(that is not a barrier to families receiving assistance under this subchapter)” after “cost sharing”.

(c) **TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.**—Section 658F(b)(2) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858d(b)(2)) is amended by striking “section 658E(c)(2)(F)” and inserting “section 658E(c)(2)(I)”.

SEC. 6. ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE.

Section 658G of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858e) is amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 658G. ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE.

“(a) **RESERVATION.**—

“(1) **RESERVATION FOR ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE SERVICES.**—A State that receives funds to carry out this subchapter for a fiscal year referred to in paragraph (2) shall reserve and use a portion of such funds, in accordance with paragraph (2), for activities provided directly, or through grants or contracts with local child care resource and referral organizations or other appropriate entities, that are designed to improve the quality of child care services and increase parental options for, and access to, high-quality child care, provided in accordance with this subchapter.

“(2) **AMOUNT OF RESERVATIONS.**—Such State shall reserve and use—

“(A) to carry out the activities described in paragraph (1), not less than—

“(i) 6 percent of the funds described in paragraph (1), for the first and second full fiscal years after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014;

“(ii) 8 percent of such funds, for the third and fourth full fiscal years after the date of enactment; and

“(iii) 10 percent of such funds, for the fifth full fiscal year after the date of enactment and each succeeding fiscal year; and

“(B) in addition to the funds reserved under subparagraph (A), 3 percent of the funds described in paragraph (1), for the first full fiscal year after the date of enactment and each suc-

ceeding fiscal year, to carry out the activities described in paragraph (1) and subsection (b)(4), as such activities relate to the quality of care for infants and toddlers.

“(b) **ACTIVITIES.**—Funds reserved under subsection (a) shall be used to carry out not fewer than 2 of the following activities:

“(1) Supporting the training, professional development, and professional advancement of the child care workforce through activities such as—

“(A) offering child care providers training and professional development that is intentional and sequential and leads to a higher level of skill or certification;

“(B) establishing or supporting programs designed to increase the retention and improve the competencies of child care providers, including wage incentive programs and initiatives that establish tiered payment rates for providers that meet or exceed child care services guidelines, as defined by the State;

“(C) offering training, professional development, and educational opportunities for child care providers that relate to the use of developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate curricula, and early childhood teaching strategies, that are scientifically based and aligned with the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of children, including offering specialized training for child care providers who care for infants and toddlers, children who are English learners, and children with disabilities (as defined in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401));

“(D) providing training concerning the State early learning and developmental guidelines, where applicable, including training concerning early mathematics and early language and literacy development and effective instructional practices to support mathematics and language and literacy development in young children;

“(E) incorporating effective use of data to guide instruction and program improvement;

“(F) including effective behavior management strategies and training, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, that promote positive social and emotional development and reduce challenge behaviors;

“(G) at the option of the State, incorporating feedback from experts at the State’s institutions of higher education, as defined in section 102 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1002), and other early childhood development experts and early childhood education and care experts;

“(H) providing training corresponding to the nutritional and physical activity needs of children to promote healthy development;

“(I) providing training or professional development for child care providers to serve and support children with disabilities;

“(J) providing training and outreach on engaging parents and families in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways to expand their knowledge, skills, and capacity to become meaningful partners in supporting their children’s learning and development; and

“(K) providing training or professional development for child care providers regarding the early neurological development of children.

“(2) Supporting the use of the early learning and developmental guidelines described in section 658E(c)(2)(T) by—

“(A) developing and implementing the State’s early learning and developmental guidelines; and

“(B) providing technical assistance to enhance early learning for preschool and school-aged children in order to promote language and literacy skills, foster school readiness, and support later school success.

“(3) Developing and implementing a tiered quality rating system for child care providers, which shall—

“(A) support and assess the quality of child care providers in the State;

“(B) build on licensing standards and other State regulatory standards for such providers;

“(C) be designed to improve the quality of different types of child care providers;

“(D) describe the quality of early learning facilities;

“(E) build the capacity of State early childhood education and care programs and communities to promote parents’ and families’ understanding of the State’s early childhood education and care system and the ratings of the programs in which the child is enrolled; and

“(F) provide, to the maximum extent practicable, financial incentives and other supports designed to help child care providers achieve and sustain higher levels of quality.

“(4) Improving the supply and quality of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers through activities, which may include—

“(A) establishing or expanding neighborhood-based high-quality comprehensive family and child development centers, which may serve as resources to child care providers in order to improve the quality of early childhood education and care and early childhood development services provided to infants and toddlers from low-income families and to help eligible child care providers improve their capacity to offer high-quality care to infants and toddlers from low-income families;

“(B) establishing or expanding the operation of community or neighborhood-based family child care networks;

“(C) supporting statewide networks of infant and toddler child care specialists, including specialists who have knowledge regarding infant and toddler development and curriculum and program implementation as well as the ability to coordinate services with early intervention specialists who provide services for infants and toddlers with disabilities under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.);

“(D) carrying out initiatives to improve the quality of the infant and toddler child care workforce, such as providing relevant training, professional development, or mentoring opportunities and linking such opportunities to career pathways, developing career pathways for providers in such workforce, and improving the State credentialing of eligible providers caring for infants and toddlers;

“(E) if applicable, developing infant and toddler components within the State’s quality rating system described in paragraph (3) for child care providers for infants and toddlers, or the development of infant and toddler components in a State’s child care licensing regulations or early learning and developmental guidelines;

“(F) improving the ability of parents to access information about high-quality infant and toddler care; and

“(G) carrying out other activities determined by the State to improve the quality of infant and toddler care provided in the State, and for which there is evidence that the activities will lead to improved infant and toddler health and safety, infant and toddler development, or infant and toddler well-being, including providing training (including training in safe sleep practices, first aid, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation).

“(5) Promoting broad child care provider participation in the quality rating system described in paragraph (3).

“(6) Establishing or expanding a statewide system of child care resource and referral services.

“(7) Facilitating compliance with State requirements for inspection, monitoring, training, and health and safety, and with State licensing standards.

“(8) Evaluating and assessing the quality and effectiveness of child care programs and services offered in the State, including evaluating how such programs and services may improve the overall school readiness of young children.

“(9) Supporting child care providers in the pursuit of accreditation by an established national accrediting body with demonstrated,

valid, and reliable program standards of high quality.

“(10) Supporting State or local efforts to develop or adopt high-quality program standards relating to health, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development and providing resources to enable eligible child care providers to meet, exceed, or sustain success in meeting or exceeding, such standards.

“(11) Carrying out other activities determined by the State to improve the quality of child care services provided in the State, and for which measurement of outcomes relating to improved provider preparedness, child safety, child well-being, or school readiness is possible.

“(c) CERTIFICATION.—Beginning with fiscal year 2015, at the beginning of each fiscal year, the State shall annually submit to the Secretary a certification containing an assurance that the State was in compliance with subsection (a) during the preceding fiscal year and a description of how the State used funds received under this subchapter to comply with subsection (a) during that preceding fiscal year.

“(d) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—Each State receiving funds under this subchapter shall prepare and submit an annual report to the Secretary, which shall include information about—

“(1) the amount of funds that are reserved under subsection (a);

“(2) the activities carried out under this section; and

“(3) the measures that the State will use to evaluate the State’s progress in improving the quality of child care programs and services in the State.

“(e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall offer technical assistance, in accordance with section 6581(a)(3), which may include technical assistance through the use of grants or cooperative agreements, to States for the activities described in subsection (b).

“(f) CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this section shall be construed as providing the Secretary the authority to regulate, direct, or dictate State child care quality activities or progress in implementing those activities.”

SEC. 7. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.) is amended by inserting after section 658G the following:

“SEC. 658H. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—A State that receives funds to carry out this subchapter shall have in effect—

“(1) requirements, policies, and procedures to require and conduct criminal background checks for child care staff members (including prospective child care staff members) of child care providers described in subsection (c)(1); and

“(2) licensing, regulation, and registration requirements, as applicable, that prohibit the employment of child care staff members as described in subsection (c).

“(b) REQUIREMENTS.—A criminal background check for a child care staff member under subsection (a) shall include—

“(1) a search of each State criminal and sex offender registry or repository in the State where the child care staff member resides and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding 10 years;

“(2) a search of State-based child abuse and neglect registries and databases in the State where the child care staff member resides and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding 10 years;

“(3) a search of the National Crime Information Center;

“(4) a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System; and

“(5) a search of the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. 16901 et seq.).

“(c) PROHIBITIONS.—

“(1) CHILD CARE STAFF MEMBERS.—A child care staff member shall be ineligible for employment by a child care provider that is licensed, regulated, or registered by the State or for which assistance is provided in accordance with this subchapter, if such individual—

“(A) refuses to consent to the criminal background check described in subsection (b);

“(B) knowingly makes a materially false statement in connection with such criminal background check;

“(C) is registered, or is required to be registered, on a State sex offender registry or repository or the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. 16901 et seq.); or

“(D) has been convicted of a felony consisting of—

“(i) murder, as described in section 1111 of title 18, United States Code;

“(ii) child abuse or neglect;

“(iii) a crime against children, including child pornography;

“(iv) spousal abuse;

“(v) a crime involving rape or sexual assault;

“(vi) kidnaping;

“(vii) arson;

“(viii) physical assault or battery; or

“(ix) subject to subsection (e)(4), a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years.

“(2) CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.—A child care provider described in paragraph (1) shall be ineligible for assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter if the provider employs a staff member who is ineligible for employment under paragraph (1).

“(d) SUBMISSION OF REQUESTS FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—A child care provider covered by subsection (c) shall submit a request, to the appropriate State agency designated by a State, for a criminal background check described in subsection (b), for each child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) of the provider.

“(2) STAFF MEMBERS.—Subject to paragraph (4), in the case of an individual who became a child care staff member before the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, the provider shall submit such a request—

“(A) prior to the last day described in subsection (i)(1); and

“(B) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this paragraph for that staff member.

“(3) PROSPECTIVE STAFF MEMBERS.—Subject to paragraph (4), in the case of an individual who is a prospective child care staff member on or after that date of enactment, the provider shall submit such a request—

“(A) prior to the date the individual becomes a child care staff member of the provider; and

“(B) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this paragraph for that staff member.

“(4) BACKGROUND CHECK FOR ANOTHER CHILD CARE PROVIDER.—A child care provider shall not be required to submit a request under paragraph (2) or (3) for a child care staff member if—

“(A) the staff member received a background check described in subsection (b)—

“(i) within 5 years before the latest date on which such a submission may be made; and

“(ii) while employed by or seeking employment by another child care provider within the State;

“(B) the State provided to the first provider a qualifying background check result, consistent with this subchapter, for the staff member; and

“(C) the staff member is employed by a child care provider within the State, or has been separated from employment from a child care provider within the State for a period of not more than 180 consecutive days.

“(e) BACKGROUND CHECK RESULTS AND APPEALS.—

“(1) **BACKGROUND CHECK RESULTS.**—The State shall carry out the request of a child care provider for a criminal background check as expeditiously as possible, but in not to exceed 45 days after the date on which such request was submitted, and shall provide the results of the criminal background check to such provider and to the current or prospective staff member.

“(2) **PRIVACY.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The State shall provide the results of the criminal background check to the provider in a statement that indicates whether a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) is eligible or ineligible for employment described in subsection (c), without revealing any disqualifying crime or other related information regarding the individual.

“(B) **INELIGIBLE STAFF MEMBER.**—If the child care staff member is ineligible for such employment due to the background check, the State will, when providing the results of the background check, include information related to each disqualifying crime, in a report to the staff member or prospective staff member.

“(C) **PUBLIC RELEASE OF RESULTS.**—No State shall publicly release or share the results of individual background checks, however, such results of background checks may be included in the development or dissemination of local or statewide data related to background checks, if such results are not individually identifiable.

“(3) **APPEALS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The State shall provide for a process by which a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) may appeal the results of a criminal background check conducted under this section to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such member's criminal background report.

“(B) **APPEALS PROCESS.**—The State shall ensure that—

“(i) each child care staff member shall be given notice of the opportunity to appeal;

“(ii) a child care staff member will receive instructions about how to complete the appeals process if the child care staff member wishes to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in such member's criminal background report; and

“(iii) the appeals process is completed in a timely manner for each child care staff member.

“(4) **REVIEW.**—The State may allow for a review process through which the State may determine that a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) disqualified for a crime specified in subsection (c)(1)(D)(ix) is eligible for employment described in subsection (c)(1), notwithstanding subsection (c). The review process shall be consistent with title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.).

“(5) **NO PRIVATE RIGHT OF ACTION.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a private right of action if the provider is in compliance with State regulations and requirements.

“(f) **FEES FOR BACKGROUND CHECKS.**—Fees that a State may charge for the costs of processing applications and administering a criminal background check as required by this section shall not exceed the actual costs to the State for the processing and administration.

“(g) **CONSTRUCTION.**—

“(1) **DISQUALIFICATION FOR OTHER CRIMES.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent a State from disqualifying individuals as child care staff members based on their conviction for crimes not specifically listed in this section that bear upon the fitness of an individual to provide care for and have responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

“(2) **RIGHTS AND REMEDIES.**—Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter or otherwise affect the rights and remedies provided for child care staff members residing in a State that disqualifies individuals as child care staff members for crimes not specifically provided for under this section.

“(h) **DEFINITIONS.**—In this section—

“(1) the term ‘child care provider’ means a center-based child care provider, a family child care provider, or another provider of child care services for compensation and on a regular basis that—

“(A) is not an individual who is related to all children for whom child care services are provided; and

“(B) is licensed, regulated, or registered under State law or receives assistance provided in accordance with this subchapter; and

“(2) the term ‘child care staff member’ means an individual (other than an individual who is related to all children for whom child care services are provided)—

“(A) who is employed by a child care provider for compensation;

“(B) whose activities involve the care or supervision of children for a child care provider or unsupervised access to children who are cared for or supervised by a child care provider; or

“(C) who is a family child care provider.

“(i) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—A State that receives funds under this subchapter shall meet the requirements of this section for the provision of criminal background checks for child care staff members described in subsection (d)(1) not later than the last day of the second full fiscal year after the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014.

“(2) **EXTENSION.**—The Secretary may grant a State an extension of time, of not more than 1 fiscal year, to meet the requirements of this section if the State demonstrates a good faith effort to comply with the requirements of this section.

“(3) **PENALTY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE.**—Except as provided in paragraphs (1) and (2), for any fiscal year that a State fails to comply substantially with the requirements of this section, the Secretary shall withhold 5 percent of the funds that would otherwise be allocated to that State in accordance with this subchapter for the following fiscal year.”.

SEC. 8. REPORTS AND INFORMATION.

(a) **ADMINISTRATION.**—Section 658I of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858g) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by inserting a comma after “publish”; and

(ii) by striking “and” at the end;

(B) by striking paragraph (3) and inserting the following:

“(3) provide technical assistance to States (which may include providing assistance on a reimbursable basis), consistent with (as appropriate) scientifically valid research, to carry out this subchapter; and”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(4) disseminate, for voluntary informational purposes, information on practices that scientifically valid research indicates are most successful in improving the quality of programs that receive assistance under this subchapter.”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(c) **PROHIBITION.**—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed as providing the Secretary the authority to permit States to alter the eligibility requirements for eligible children, including work requirements that apply to the parents of eligible children.”.

(b) **REQUESTS FOR RELIEF.**—Section 658I of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, as amended by subsection (a), is further amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) **REQUEST FOR RELIEF.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The State may submit to the Secretary a request for relief from any provision of Federal law (including a regulation, policy, or procedure) affecting the delivery of child care services with Federal funds, other than this subchapter, that conflicts with a requirement of this subchapter.

“(2) **CONTENTS.**—Such request shall—

“(A) detail the provision of Federal law that conflicts with that requirement;

“(B) describe how modifying compliance with that provision of Federal law to meet the requirements of this subchapter will, by itself, improve delivery of child care services for children in the State; and

“(C) certify that the health, safety, and well-being of children served through assistance received under this subchapter will not be compromised as a result.

“(3) **CONSULTATION.**—The Secretary shall consult with the State submitting the request and the head of each Federal agency (other than the Secretary) with responsibility for administering the Federal law detailed in the State's request. The consulting parties shall jointly identify—

“(A) any provision of Federal law (including a regulation, policy, or procedure) for which a waiver is necessary to enable the State to provide services in accordance with the request; and

“(B) any corresponding waiver.

“(4) **WAIVERS.**—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and after the joint identification described in paragraph (3), the head of the Federal agency involved shall have the authority to waive any statutory provision administered by that agency, or any regulation, policy, or procedure issued by that agency, that has been so identified, unless the head of the Federal agency determines that such a waiver is inconsistent with the objectives of this subchapter or the Federal law from which relief is sought.

“(5) **APPROVAL.**—Within 90 days after the receipt of a State's request under this subsection, the Secretary shall inform the State of the Secretary's approval or disapproval of the request. If the plan is disapproved, the Secretary shall inform the State, in writing, of the reasons for the disapproval and give the State the opportunity to amend the request.

“(6) **DURATION.**—The Secretary may approve a request under this subsection for a period of not more than 3 years, and may renew the approval for additional periods of not more than 3 years.

“(7) **TERMINATION.**—The Secretary shall terminate approval of a request for relief authorized under this subsection if the Secretary determines, after notice and opportunity for a hearing, that the performance of a State granted relief under this subsection has been inadequate, or if such relief is no longer necessary to achieve its original purposes.”.

(c) **REPORTS.**—Section 658K(a) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858i(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)(B)—

(A) in clause (ix), by striking “and” at the end;

(B) in clause (x), by inserting “and” at the end; and

(C) by inserting after clause (x), the following: “(xi) whether the children receiving assistance under this subchapter are homeless children;”;

(2) in paragraph (2)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A), by striking “1997” and inserting “2014”; and

(B) in subparagraph (A), by striking “section 658P(5)” and inserting “section 658P(6)”.

(d) **REPORT BY SECRETARY.**—Section 658L of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858j) is amended—

(1) by striking the section heading and inserting the following:

“**SEC. 658L. REPORTS, HOTLINE, AND WEB SITE.**”;

(2) by striking “Not later” and inserting the following:

“(a) **REPORT BY SECRETARY.**—Not later”;

(3) by striking “1998” and inserting “2016”; and

(4) by striking “to the Committee” and all that follows through “of the Senate” and inserting “to the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate”;

(5) by adding at the end the following:

“(b) NATIONAL TOLL-FREE HOTLINE AND WEB SITE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall operate a national toll-free hotline and Web site, to—

“(A) develop and disseminate publicly available child care consumer education information for parents and help parents access safe, affordable, and quality child care in their community; and

“(B) to allow persons to report (anonymously if desired) suspected child abuse or neglect, or violations of health and safety requirements, by an eligible child care provider that receives assistance under this subchapter.

“(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The Secretary shall ensure that the hotline and Web site meet the following requirements:

“(A) REFERRAL TO LOCAL CHILD CARE PROVIDERS.—The Web site shall be hosted by ‘childcare.gov’. The Web site shall enable a child care consumer to enter a zip code and obtain a referral to local child care providers described in subparagraph (B) within a specified search radius.

“(B) INFORMATION.—The Web site shall provide to consumers, directly or through linkages to State databases, at a minimum—

“(i) a localized list of all State licensed child care providers;

“(ii) any provider-specific information from a Quality Rating and Improvement System or information about other quality indicators, to the extent the information is publicly available and to the extent practicable;

“(iii) any other provider-specific information about compliance with licensing, and health and safety, requirements to the extent the information is publicly available and to the extent practicable;

“(iv) referrals to local resource and referral organizations from which consumers can find more information about child care providers, and a recommendation that consumers consult with the organizations when selecting a child care provider; and

“(v) State information about child care subsidy programs and other financial supports available to families.

“(C) NATIONWIDE CAPACITY.—The Web site and hotline shall have the capacity to help families in every State and community in the Nation.

“(D) INFORMATION AT ALL HOURS.—The Web site shall provide, to parents and families, access to information about child care 24 hours a day.

“(E) SERVICES IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.—The Web site and hotline shall ensure the widest possible access to services for families who speak languages other than English.

“(F) HIGH-QUALITY CONSUMER EDUCATION AND REFERRAL.—The Web site and hotline shall ensure that families have access to child care consumer education and referral services that are consistent and of high quality.

“(3) PROHIBITION.—Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to allow the Secretary to compel States to provide additional data and information that is currently (as of the date of enactment of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014) not publicly available, or is not required by this subchapter.”

SEC. 9. RESERVATION FOR TOLL-FREE HOTLINE AND WEB SITE; PAYMENTS TO BENEFIT INDIAN CHILDREN.

Section 658O of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858m) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a), by adding at the end the following:

“(3) NATIONAL TOLL-FREE HOTLINE AND WEB SITE.—The Secretary shall reserve not less than \$1,000,000 of the amount appropriated under this subchapter for each fiscal year for the operation of a national toll-free hotline and Web site, under section 658L(b).”; and

(2) in subsection (c)(2), by adding at the end the following:

“(D) LICENSING AND STANDARDS.—In lieu of any licensing and regulatory requirements applicable under State or local law, the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribes and tribal organizations, shall develop minimum child care standards that shall be applicable to Indian tribes and tribal organizations receiving assistance under this subchapter. Such standards shall appropriately reflect Indian tribe and tribal organization needs and available resources, and shall include standards requiring a publicly available application, health and safety standards, and standards requiring a reservation of funds for activities to improve the quality of child care provided to Indian children.”

SEC. 10. DEFINITIONS.

Section 658P of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858n) is amended—

(1) by striking paragraph (4) and inserting the following:

“(3) CHILD WITH A DISABILITY.—The term ‘child with a disability’ means—

“(A) a child with a disability, as defined in section 602 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401);

“(B) a child who is eligible for early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.);

“(C) a child who is less than 13 years of age and who is eligible for services under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794); and

“(D) a child with a disability, as defined by the State involved.

“(4) ELIGIBLE CHILD.—The term ‘eligible child’ means an individual—

“(A) who is less than 13 years of age;

“(B) whose family income does not exceed 85 percent of the State median income for a family of the same size; and

“(C) who—

“(i) resides with a parent or parents who are working or attending a job training or educational program; or

“(ii) is receiving, or needs to receive, protective services and resides with a parent or parents not described in clause (i).”;;

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (5) through (9) as paragraphs (6) through (10), respectively;

(3) by inserting after paragraph (4), the following:

“(5) ENGLISH LEARNER.—The term ‘English learner’ means an individual who is limited English proficient, as defined in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7801) or section 637 of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9832).”;;

(4) in paragraph (6)(A), as redesignated by paragraph (2)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking “section 658E(c)(2)(E)” and inserting “section 658E(c)(2)(F)”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking “section 658E(c)(2)(F)” and inserting “section 658E(c)(2)(I)”;;

(5) in paragraph (9), as redesignated by paragraph (2), by striking “designated” and all that follows and inserting “designated or established under section 658D(a).”;;

(6) in paragraph (10), as redesignated by paragraph (2), by inserting “, foster parent,” after “guardian”;

(7) by redesignating paragraphs (11) through (14) as paragraphs (12) through (15), respectively; and

(8) by inserting after paragraph (10), as redesignated by paragraph (2), the following:

“(11) SCIENTIFICALLY VALID RESEARCH.—The term ‘scientifically valid research’ includes applied research, basic research, and field-initiated research, for which the rationale, design, and interpretation are soundly developed in accordance with principles of scientific research.”

SEC. 11. STUDIES ON WAITING LISTS.

(a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct studies to deter-

mine, for each State, the number of families that—

(1) are eligible to receive assistance under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.);

(2) have applied for the assistance; and

(3) have been placed on a waiting list for the assistance.

(b) REPORT.—The Comptroller General shall prepare a report containing the results of each study and shall submit the report to the appropriate committees of Congress—

(1) not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act; and

(2) every 2 years thereafter.

(c) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term “State” has the meaning given the term in section 658P of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858n).

SEC. 12. CONFORMING AMENDMENT.

Section 319C–1(b)(2)(A)(vii) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d–3a(b)(2)(A)(vii)) is amended by inserting “or established” after “designated”.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

AMENDMENT NO. 2811

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I am pleased the Senate is now considering the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. I have a first-degree amendment to the committee-reported substitute amendment at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the amendment.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN] proposes an amendment numbered 2811.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To include rural and remote areas as underserved areas identified in the State plan)

On page 88, line 8, insert “, such as rural and remote areas” after “underserved areas”.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, we are now on the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. I know Senator ALEXANDER and I, and others, are anxious to consider amendments. I encourage people who have amendments to bring them to the floor so Senator BURR, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator MIKULSKI or I could look at them and get things lined up.

It is my intent—and I hope I can speak for Senator ALEXANDER on this too—to have an open yet managed process with respect to this bill and for Senators who have relevant amendments to have the opportunity to have them offered and to be voted on. I expect we would have a couple of votes within the next few hours. I don’t even know when but sometime soon. So again, I strongly encourage Senators with amendments to bring them over and file them so we can get them discussed expeditiously.

This bill was voted unanimously out of the HELP Committee last September. I hope it will receive strong bipartisan support here on the Senate floor. I give tremendous credit and thanks to Senators MIKULSKI and

BURR, the sponsors of this legislation, for their leadership in this process over a couple of years working together, creating a bill which takes huge steps in improving the lives of children and their families.

At the outset I also thank our ranking member Senator ALEXANDER for his partnership and for working with us to reauthorize this vital program. Our offices have worked collaboratively over the last couple of years to produce a strong bipartisan bill.

I would start first by saying this program has a big impact in my State of Iowa. Right now Iowa serves about 15,800 children every month with CCDBG funds: 28 percent infants and toddlers; 26 percent ages 3 to 4; and about half or 46 percent, ages 5 to 13.

Most people think of this simply as a childcare-type bill for infants and toddlers, but this is not true. This goes to age 13, but over half goes to those under the age of 5.

The last time this was reauthorized in 1996, 18 years ago, this program was basically looked at as mainly a work support program, taking care of kids while parents went to work. It was only incidentally thought of as something which could have a real impact on the lives of kids. Well, 18 years later and backed by scientific research, we know the program can and should be much more. In addition to providing vital work support for parents, it could be a rich early learning opportunity for children.

In 2000 the National Research Council published a groundbreaking report called "Neurons to Neighborhoods." The report's author said:

From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life. . . . that what happens during the first months and years of life matters a lot, not because this period of development provides an indelible blueprint for adult well-being, but because it sets either a sturdy or fragile stage for what follows.

What this bill does is set that sturdy stage.

This report that I talk about from the National Research Council reinforces what we already know—that learning starts at birth and that preparation for learning begins even before birth. Eighty percent of a child's brain develops between birth and age 3. Because much of a child's intellect and skills develop before he or she begins kindergarten, we need to give all children every opportunity to reach their full potential at their earliest stages in life. This means supporting access to high-quality early-learning programs, including high-quality childcare.

The bill before us represents a strong and positive advance for low-income families who benefit from the childcare subsidies. The bill makes many needed improvements that will help establish high expectations for federally subsidized childcare in this country. The bill accomplishes a lot of good. I will highlight two or three items here.

First of all, education and training for childcare workers. Under this bill

the States that apply and get these block grants will need to develop minimum education and training requirements for childcare workers that describe what they must know and be able to do to promote the health and development of the children they serve. Just as we know that a great teacher is one of the most important factors in a classroom, we also know that one of the most critical components of early development in children is whether they have supportive nurturing interactions with caring adults.

Another important thing we do in the bill is to promote safety and health standards. This bill ensures that licensed childcare providers receive a preclearance inspection and one annual inspection thereafter. Alarming, some States inspect childcare centers only once in 5 years. Some States don't even do a preclearance inspection until a provider is serving more than a dozen children.

The bill also stipulates and focuses on vulnerable populations, including children with disabilities, infants and toddlers, and children whose parents work nontraditional hours. I want to highlight that the sponsors of this bill, Senator BURR and Senator MIKULSKI, took great care to ensure that childcare programs supported through this block grant would be well-suited for children with special needs and their families. The legislation asks States to consider the unique needs of children with disabilities when developing training requirements for childcare workers. A childcare worker may be trained to take care of non-disabled children. But taking care of a child with a disability requires a little bit more expertise and a little extra training, and that is what this bill does provide. It also lets parents know the types of services available through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The bill also provides families with stability and continuity of care for families. Once they receive care, they are going to get it for at least 1 year if they are initially deemed eligible. Currently, some States require parents to reapply for care after only a few months. In some cases States will kick parents off of care if they receive a small pay raise that makes them ineligible under the State's eligibility guidelines. This bill remedies this by ensuring that as long as a parent is working or is in a training program and whose income does not exceed 85 percent of the State's median income, they will get care for at least 1 year without having to work. Again, this helps children because we know that a lot of times these kinds of disruptions can really set a child back, and this allows at least for continuity for 1 year.

The bill also supports the development of a Web site. I know Senator BURR was very interested in that and helped promote and put that in the bill. The Web site is going to be available for all parents to show them the

range of childcare providers in their area so they can shop around and see what is out there.

Right now the law says States can set the eligibility requirement as long as it does not exceed 85 percent of the State's median income. If you look at all of the children ages 0 to age 13—because the bill covers up to age 13—if you look at preschool age kids 0 to 5, we do a little bit better. States are serving a little more than a quarter of the children who would be eligible under the Federal guidelines. I think this shows the present landscape right now. Out of 100 percent of the kids that are eligible, we have 73 percent eligible preschool-aged children not being served. There are about 27 percent of preschool-aged children being served. So we do have a long way to go. As chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies, our committee has fought for years to increase funding so we can serve more children. The fiscal year 2014 omnibus included more than a \$154 million increase for the childcare program. I know that sounds like a lot, but all that it did was replace the \$118 million cut that happened because of sequestration. We replaced the \$118 million plus whatever that figures out to—about another \$36 more million. So it helps. The increased funding will help States improve access to quality and affordable childcare by increasing the number of kids who can receive it.

But actually we have a long way to go. The last chart shows what is happening. If you look at the blue line at the bottom, that is the actual funding in this program. If you go back to 2005 and see what was in place, we are about \$600 million short of where we would be if we kept up with inflation. You see, this is 2005. Those who have been around since then, we know what it was like before that. We have lost a lot of ground. So we need to make that up, and I hope we can do that in our appropriations bills that are coming up.

This bill changes the landscape and makes it a lot better for families out there. The bill authorizes the funding, but the appropriations have to fund it. I hope that we can in fiscal year 2015 continue to be able to keep up the funding increases for the childcare development block grants.

It is a good bill. I am very proud of this bill, proud of the efforts that Senator BURR and Senator MIKULSKI put into it over a long period of time. So I urge my colleagues to join in the bipartisan spirit of cooperation that we have witnessed in the health committee over the last year.

If Senators have amendments that are germane to the bill, I encourage them to bring them over so we can take a look at them and determine a fair path forward with respect to those amendments.

Again, I thank Senator ALEXANDER for a great working relationship on this committee and thank him for

working so hard to help bring this bill forward to the bill today.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I want to say to the Senator from Iowa how much I appreciate working with him.

We were talking yesterday, and he told me—I think I have these facts about right—that our committee in this Congress has reported 17 bills that have passed the Senate and 10 that have become law, which I suspect exceeds that of any other committee. As our hearing this morning on the minimum wage showed, it is not because we always agree with each other all the time. We probably have the most ideologically split committee in the Congress by party, but we get a lot done. That is due in great measure to the way the Senator from Iowa leads the committee, and I appreciate that very much.

I will have more to say about Senator BURR and Senator MIKULSKI in a few moments because they have done the yeoman's work on this. They are the leaders of this effort. They immersed themselves in it for the last two years. They brought it to a position which convinced everybody on the committee it was time to move ahead, but that is not where we were when we started. We had lots of differences of opinions, and we came to a conclusion that they will be explaining in detail.

So the way we will proceed today is this. After my remarks, Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR will step up and begin to manage the bill. Senator HARKIN and I will be here. We are continuing right through the afternoon.

We hope that Senators will bring their amendments to the floor. What we are hoping to do is to have a debate about the child care and development block grant. We are hoping to have amendments, and we will have votes on those amendments. It is not our desire to pick this Democratic amendment or this Republican amendment. If you have an amendment on the child care and development block grant that is related to the bill, please bring it over and talk to Senator BURR, Senator MIKULSKI, Senator HARKIN, or me, and we will start lining them up. There will be time for debate. There will be a vote and it will be considered.

Our hope is to have votes this afternoon, votes tomorrow morning, and to let Senators know that there won't be votes tonight so they can plan their schedules. Senator BURR will talk more about that and the time for attempting to conclude the bill tomorrow. That is our goal. That is the way the Senate traditionally has worked. It is the way we hope it works today.

Since Senator MIKULSKI from Maryland and the Senator from North Carolina have done the principal amount of work on the bill, I see no need for me to go through the details of the bill. I think they are better equipped and pre-

pared to do that. Let me try to put the whole effort in perspective before I step aside and Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR step up.

During World War II there were a great many mothers, women, who took jobs outside the home. That was different. In our agricultural society families worked together. As the industrial society in America developed during the 20th century, men largely went away from home to work and women mostly worked at home.

But in World War II something different happened. Many of the men were overseas fighting. There was a lot of work to be done at home, and so women took jobs in the factories that they didn't have before. That produced a new phenomenon in the American society which was called worksite daycare. Someone had to take care of the children. In many cases companies employing large numbers of women during World War II provided sites at the workplace so that mothers could bring their children while they worked.

Then after the war was over, things went back to the way they were before, and most American women worked at home. That began to change probably in the 1970s. It is probably fair to say that the greatest social change in our country over the last 40 years has been the gradual and steady phenomenon of more women in the workplace outside the home and the adjustments our society has made to that.

I was lucky. I had an early head start in the little town of Maryville, Tennessee, where I grew up at the edge of the Smoky Mountains. My mother had one of the town's two preschool education programs. She had it in a converted garage in her backyard. She had been trained in Kansas and in a settlement house in Chicago. It is hard for me today to imagine how she could do this, but she had 25 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds in the morning and 25 5-year-olds in the afternoon. That was Mrs. Alexander's preschool, which we called the institution of lower learning.

She had nowhere else to put me, so I became the first Senator to have 5 years of kindergarten, which I probably needed, but which gave me a head start. It gave me the understanding of what Senator HARKIN said earlier—that research then, but especially now, shows the brain develops at least from the moment of conception and that all of the influences around an infant are important to that person's development over a long period of time.

Most parents who understand that want to make sure that they are with a child at a very early age stimulating that child, or if they can't be with their child for some period of time for some reason, someone else is looking after their child. Along with the changing role of women in the workforce came the idea of more childcare.

I remember in 1986 when I was Governor of Tennessee, the head of our human services division—a woman named Marguerite Sallee, now Mar-

guerite Kondracke—came to me, and she proposed that I ask the businesses in Tennessee to create 1,000 worksite daycare places. I was kind of taken aback by that because I didn't understand the need for it, and I didn't think the businesses would do it voluntarily.

Well, we did that, and we got twice as many worksite daycare places as we requested. It was good for businesses to do and there was plenty of demand for it from the parents who had to take their children to work. The next year I was out of a job—I was through with my time as Governor—and so was Marguerite. Along with Captain Kangaroo—Bob Keeshan—my wife, and Brad Martin, we founded a company called Corporate Child Care, which provided worksite daycare places. After about 10 years, it merged with its major competitor Bright Horizons, and they became what is today the largest provider of worksite daycare in the world.

Companies have realized the importance of worksite daycare, but not all mothers and fathers can send their children to Bright Horizons while they work, and so there came to be a recognition that there needed to be some response by the Federal Government.

The next year, about 1988, the first Federal childcare programs came into existence. In 1996, the law we are considering today was basically a part of the reform of the Welfare Act. It is a remarkable law because it involves lots of State flexibility. In other words, it acknowledges that what is good for Maryland may not be good for North Carolina. It models our higher education system by letting the money follow the child to the institution that the parent thinks is best for their child. These are vouchers. It has gradually grown to an area where we spend \$5 billion or \$6 billion of taxpayers' money each year to provide about 1½ million children with an opportunity for childcare.

I will mention one success story so we have an example of exactly what we are talking about. I am thinking of a young mother in Memphis, TN, who was attending LeMoyne-Owen College and earning a business degree. She had an infant child, and so she put that child in a childcare center she chose. The voucher, through this program we are talking about today, provided \$500 to \$600 a month to help pay for the bill. Infant childcare is especially expensive. If you think about it, this is understandable.

The success part of the story is that she earned her degree. She is now an assistant manager at Walmart in Memphis. She has a second child who attends the same childcare center now, but she earns enough to pay the full cost.

This program encourages work, it encourages job training, and for those Americans who are low income and working or low income and training or educating themselves for a job, this helps them get that job. This is an important bill for many families.

In Tennessee, we have about 20,000 families affected each month and nearly 40,000 children. It is a big help to them. It makes a difference in their lives.

I thank Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR for their work on this legislation. I know of no two Senators in this body who approach issues in a more serious, effective, and determined way. They also understand that in a body of 100 Members, where we each have a right to object, that no bill is going to be exactly what any of us want.

For example, I am leery of the extent of the background checks required by this bill, which is one of its major accomplishments. As a former Governor, I am very skeptical of Washington setting rules for States, but I accept the compromise they have agreed to with the background checks. We talked that matter through, and I think it is a sound proposal. I congratulate them for the way they have done this over the last 2 years and the way we have approached it.

I will conclude with where I started. We are asking Senators to join us in a debate about the child care and development block grant. We hope Senators will come to the floor with their ideas on it. We know there are a number of Senators who have amendments on both sides of the aisle. What we are saying to those Senators is if you have an amendment that is related to our bill, you will have a chance to talk about it and you will have a chance for it to be voted on and perhaps accepted by the full Senate, and hopefully this bill will go to the House and become law.

We know that has not been the story as often as it should be in the Senate, but we would like to see that happen more often. It requires a little bit of restraint on the part of each of us as Senators. We can't all exercise all of our rights all the time and get anything done. It requires some trust and restraint on the part of our leaders, Senator REID and Senator MCCONNELL. We appreciate them turning the management of the bill over to Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR, with Senator HARKIN and me in support of their efforts.

We appreciate the cooperation of the many Senators who have already come up with excellent amendments and notified us about them. Senator BURR and Senator MIKULSKI know about them and will talk about them.

At this stage, I wish to step down and turn this matter over to Senator MIKULSKI first, and then Senator BURR. We invite Senators to come over. We will continue through lunch and discuss, debate, talk, and begin voting on the Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I am so pleased to bring to the floor this

very important bipartisan legislation, the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. I am standing here today to speak on behalf of families and children across this Nation.

I am excited to bring forward this bill for two reasons; one, the content it represents—a reauthorization framework for the childcare and development block grant, one of the most important tools families have to be able to afford child care so they may go to work. It is a childcare development bill and it is a work assistance bill.

I am also proud of the process by which we are undertaking this bill, the process by which we arrived at and brought this bill to the floor today.

This legislation has not been reauthorized since 1996. Senator RICHARD BURR of North Carolina and I serve on the HELP Committee, of which the Presiding Officer is a member. We once shared the Subcommittee on Children and Families. Senator BURR and I, who have a longstanding professional relationship, said: Let's see what we can get done on that committee. Where can we find common ground? Where can we find that sensible center? How can we move things forward on a bipartisan basis where we add value to our country but don't add to our debt?

We put our heads together, and by looking at the childcare needs in our country, we began a regular order process. We held three hearings, lots of meetings with stakeholders, over 50 organizations, as well as meetings with our staffs and each other, characterized by three factors: mutual respect, focusing on national needs, and how we could be smart in terms of our policies yet frugal in terms of the way we went about the money. We didn't expand the vouchers the way some of us would like, but we looked at how we could expand value by focusing on quality. Because of the tone we set with each other, we were able to do this.

This is how the Senate should operate. We should have mutual respect, talking with each other and not at each other, listening to the experts, listening to the grassroots, and paying attention to the bottom line. We were able to accomplish what we set out to do.

Today, as we come to the floor, this is an open amendment process. We talk a lot about regular order. There are very few Members of the Senate—particularly those who have been elected since 2006—who know what regular order is. A quick thumbnail of it means legislation is brought to the floor, we offer an open amendment process, debate, deliberate, and vote. This is how we hope to be able to proceed today.

There will be no strong-arming, no stiff-arming, no heavy hand, just regular order, regular debate, with every Senator having the opportunity to have their day and their say. This is how the Senate should operate.

What also excites me in coming to the floor is not only being the Senator from Maryland, but also, as the Pre-

siding Officer knows, I am a professionally trained social worker. I have a master's degree in social work. I was a foster care worker for Catholic Charities, and I was a child abuse worker for the Department of Social Services. One of the reasons I came into politics was to be able to take the value of a social worker and bring it to the floor of the U.S. Congress to make sure we looked at families and their needs. This is what I think this bill does.

We are looking at childcare. Every family in America with children is concerned about childcare. They wonder if it is available. They wonder if it is affordable. They worry if it is safe, and they are also concerned about whether it will help their children to be ready to learn.

We all say that children are one of our most important resources, which also means childcare is one of our most important decisions. Families will scrimp and save to make sure they have adequate childcare. If you are a single parent and working a double shift, you wonder if childcare is safe and sound. If you are a student working toward a degree, you want to make sure that while you are in school, your children are in a good preschool or daycare program. These worries weigh heavily on the shoulders of parents everywhere, and our bill lifts that burden. This bill gives families and children the childcare they need.

This bill, as I said, is the product of a bipartisan effort. Childcare is something all families worry about, regardless of income or ZIP Code. This bill ensures that all children get the care they need and deserve. What we did was focus on those needs.

Childcare has not been evaluated since 1996. At that time the program was solely a vision as a workforce aid. What we know today is that this is also the time of the most rapid period of brain development, and that is why it is imperative we ensure our young children are in high-quality childcare programs. We need to make sure that childcare nurtures their development, prepares their minds, and prepares them for school.

The current program is out of date. It doesn't go far enough to promote health and safety and also make sure that the staff is ready to meet emergency responses and take care of the needs of those children.

When we worked on this legislation, we focused on quality. I will elaborate on that in more detail.

Way back when this bill was first signed into law, it was under George Herbert Bush. It was so women could go from welfare to work. President Clinton came in, and part of the welfare reform was to be able to do that. Now it is a new day, and we want to make sure that childcare not only helps the parents but it also focuses on the children. We want to ensure that when parents leave their children at daycare, they know their children's providers are trained, that the environment is safe, and their program will

help their children prepare for their education.

We know there are differences in North Carolina compared to Maryland. We know there are differences in Utah compared to Maine. So what we have provided is the ability to make sure there is incredible State flexibility. I will go into that in more detail.

I hope my colleagues will join Senator BURR, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator HARKIN, and myself in passing this bill. I look forward to further debate and discussion.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I thank the Chair, and I thank my good friend and colleague from Maryland, Senator MIKULSKI.

In the Senate, for those of us who have been around for a while, we understand how it works. I am not sure the media does justice to the American people in terms of how difficult it is for legislation to actually pass the Senate. As a matter of fact, the historical threshold of 67 and then 60 in agreement means that if a Senator is a serious legislator and their interest is to work on good policy—not perfect; I think Senator ALEXANDER said we have never seen a perfect bill—then the first thought that goes through a Senator's mind as they work on a legislative agenda is, who on the other side of the aisle can I look to whom this would be appealing to from the standpoint of their interests and, No. 2, an individual who understands how to get through difficult times? I am here to say to my colleagues that BARBARA MIKULSKI is a Senator who fills that category not just as it pertains to this legislation but as it pertains to so much because of her great depth of knowledge and, more importantly, her tenacity and her willingness to tell people no and to pursue what is right. Because at the end of the day—I think I can speak for both of us—this is not about headlines; this is about looking at a generation of kids who will be benefited by reforms to a reauthorization that hasn't happened since 1996.

Historically on this issue, George H.W. Bush started the program, and it was under the Clinton administration, under welfare reform, that we formalized these vouchers. The vouchers were really created so families who struggled to keep a job and were low income but had childcare needs didn't have to worry about the childcare piece. There was Federal assistance that was determined on a sliding scale.

By the way, let me say to my colleagues, if a State doesn't provide a waiver to a family, then they have skin in the game on these vouchers. So this is not free across the board.

This has benefited now 1.6 million families. In North Carolina, there are 74,000 vouchers on an annual basis that benefit our children. Those are family members who are either in education or who work, and they can commit to those jobs because they know that

childcare is available and the cost is affordable because of this Federal voucher program.

I think Senator MIKULSKI would agree with me in saying we hope we never see a program that waits this long to be reauthorized. Every program here deserves to be reevaluated every 5 years—No. 1, on its effectiveness, and No. 2, do we still have the problem we had when the program was started. I daresay in her time here—and she has been here a lot longer than I have, and I don't say that with regard to her age—there are programs still on the books that don't have a constituency anymore. But the hardest thing for Congress to do is to get rid of something or to consolidate. I think Senator MIKULSKI and I have always taken the attitude that if we can make this better and have a positive effect on the folks it was intended for, then that is our job. That is our responsibility as Members of the Senate.

So I certainly look forward, after the 2 years we have spent on an issue—some might listen to the debate today and say: Geez, why didn't they go to the floor and pass it by unanimous consent?

That is an option. But we also believe we are not perfect, and by reaching out to Members and colleagues and saying: Come to the floor; if Senators can make this bill better, then come to the floor and offer amendments—if a Senator comes to the floor with an amendment and we think it makes the bill worse, then we are going to vote against it, but we promise this: We will have a vote. That is an important part of the Senate, that Members always feel they can put their fingerprints, they can put their State's interest into every piece of legislation whether or not they are on that committee or subcommittee. We have now, with this bill, returned to a process that I think reaches out and incorporates that.

Let me say to our colleagues, it is our intent when I finish speaking to start accepting amendments. At some point, with both leaders' agreement, this afternoon we will target a period when we will vote on whatever stacked amendments we have been able to process. After that, we will hopefully go back and consider more amendments. I think it is our intent to not have votes tonight but to work with the leaders in order to roll those votes to tomorrow morning.

Let me make this perfectly clear to our colleagues: It is our intent to finish this bill tomorrow afternoon, period. So the way to effect positive change in this legislation—to get Senators' input into it and fingerprints on it—is to not wait until tomorrow afternoon but to come down this afternoon and debate the amendments, process the amendments, and let's work as the Senate is designed to work. So I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do that.

I rise today to speak about S. 1986, the childcare development block grant

reauthorization bill, with my good friend Senator MIKULSKI. I must say we wouldn't be here if it weren't for the cooperation of Senator HARKIN and Senator ALEXANDER. Senator HARKIN has a long history of interest and involvement with policies that affect children. He is passionate about it. Senator ALEXANDER has a similar lifetime commitment, a Senator who has served as the education governor of Tennessee, the Secretary of Education of the United States, and the president of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. So both of them come with a tremendous amount of expertise and passion for this issue.

This legislation is actually necessary to build on what the Child Care Development Block Grant Program was established for. As I said earlier, 1.6 million children nationally are served today—74,000 in North Carolina—and there tends to be a lot of talk in this body about strengthening job training, getting people back to work, and incentivizing self-reliance. I wish to recommend to my colleagues that is exactly what the Child Care Development Block Grant Program does. It says to a family: Work and we will help you with childcare. Get additional education and we will help you with childcare.

But one of the problems since 1996 when this program was created was the way we looked at one's income was an instantaneous snapshot. So as a parent, if I was offered a second shift where I could earn a little more money, I would look at how that might affect my child's childcare voucher and realize that they will take my voucher away if I take that second shift or if I work overtime and get time-and-a-half pay.

Well, this is evidence that we have looked at all angles. We have reached out to the communities that are affected. We have talked to people who are providers. We have talked to parents. We have looked at the difficulties they struggle with, because our intent is to make sure we have a piece of legislation that parents can choose to accept that shift offer, can accept working overtime and know they are not going to be adversely affected because now we are looking at the yearlong versus the individual snapshot.

So through Federal vouchers, parents who demonstrate that they are working or they are in job-training programs or furthering their education and who are below 85 percent of the State median income are eligible to receive the childcare voucher and to use that at a childcare provider of their choice in their State. This is not one where we are saying: You have to go here and you have to go there. We open it for the choice of the parent.

In addition, CDBG requires families, as I said earlier, to have skin in the game on a sliding scale based upon their income. As a block grant, States have great flexibility in how they administer these funds but are generally required to set health, safety, and quality guidelines to promote parental

choice, assist parents in becoming independent through work promotion, and provide good consumer information so parents can make good decisions about their child's care.

S. 1086, the legislation we have offered, would reauthorize this law for the first time since 1996. It would do so by making some commonsense changes that address the realities which I have highlighted, prioritizing the safety of children who receive care with Federal dollars.

First, we would require all providers and individuals who have unsupervised access to children to submit to a criminal background check. That check would ensure our young children are not left alone with individuals who have committed felonies such as murder, rape, child abuse, neglect, robbery, and other serious offenses. This provision is the result of legislation I introduced over the past several Congresses called the Child Care Protection Act, which I believe will do a great deal to improve the safety of our children.

Let me just stop there and say this is incredible because I think most Americans probably believe these background checks take place today. And to some degree they are right. States such as North Carolina have been responsible, and they do carry out some degree of background checks—although not all States, not all providers. But when this bill becomes law, it will say to all States and to all providers that receive Federal vouchers: You must do this. You must assure every parent that these felons are not part of the workforce that has unsupervised access to your children.

Second, this bill asks States to monitor through inspections the quality of childcare settings so that basic health and safety precautions are taken. Many States currently conduct no checks at all for certain settings or conduct them years apart, all while providers receive State and Federal tax dollars. At the very least, parents who are working several jobs just to make it should know that their child is in someone's care who has been trained in the basics of CPR, fire prevention, and other commonsense precautions.

I think one of our colleagues—Senator LANDRIEU—will come to the floor sometime this afternoon and offer an amendment that requires evacuation plans. Well, for a Senator from Louisiana who lived this firsthand, this is really important. It is a great job of where a Member's amendment is going to help to perfect our bill. For anybody who lives in a coastal State such as North Carolina—I am sorry I didn't think of exactly what she did—but when we look at tornadoes and when we look at fires, we are all susceptible to the need of a daycare facility having an evacuation plan so that local officials and, more importantly, parents and the providers who work there understand what to do.

Third, it asks States to make transparent all the information as widely as

possible so parents are armed with all the information they need when they shop for childcare under the Federal childcare vouchers.

Fourth, in keeping with the maximum flexibility afforded to States under the CDBG, this bill provides States the option of seeking waivers from any Federal law that funds early learning or childcare that might have conflicting or onerous results for the delivery of that care and requires the Secretary of HHS to work with other agencies to provide a waiver for those requirements so States and childcare providers can focus on providing quality care and not just complying with Washington's confusing set of requirements. In other words, the focus of this is to make sure the childcare quality component is the single most important feature to providers.

Fifth, it promotes continued employment incentives for parents to move higher in their careers by providing better guidance to States on how they determine the eligibility of parents and their children. To me, it is just common sense that we should not penalize a parent from taking on an extra shift or working overtime. But at the same time we require States to make sure that only the most needy parents receive the childcare vouchers and that they can demonstrate they are following the law's work rules. Let me say again—because I think this is lost because we have not talked about this in almost two decades—for many in the communities we all represent, this is the difference between a family being able to keep a job or to be 100 percent on assistance. What we have is a Federal program that is not just beneficial, we have the data to prove it works, and that matrix continues to be in place.

Finally, it asks States to place a greater emphasis on building quality care settings by gradually increasing the amount of Federal dollars that can be set aside from the current law's 4 percent to 10 percent over the several years that must be used to improve quality programs.

Let me explain. Today, we say you can set aside up to 4 percent for quality. We want to extend that. We want to create an incubator that is an investment in what we can do to further enhance the quality of what these children are exposed to.

I think Senator HARKIN, Senator ALEXANDER, and Senator MIKULSKI have all pointed out that when we go from infancy to age 13, we have the majority of the learning period of a child's life. Some of it we pick up in the education system. But if they go to childcare after that or they go to childcare before it, we want to make sure the quality of that, and, more importantly, the innovation of that quality, is such that all students, all children can advance because of it.

This bipartisan legislation is the result of work in the HELP Committee. It was influenced and really ramrodded

by my good friend Senator MIKULSKI. She was tireless at inviting experts. She sought practitioners in all of our States. It was that, and the leadership of our chairman and our ranking member, that brings us here today.

I believe this legislation will go a long way toward improving childcare in our country but also toward promoting self-sufficiency and independence for working parents. This is not a Federal handout. This is a partnership between the Federal Government and the opportunity for parents to have a better life. I think the way we have addressed the commonsense changes in reauthorization makes it more likely, not less likely, that more parents will succeed at that.

So I encourage my colleagues to support this bill. But I really do stress with my colleagues, now is the time to come to the floor. Bring your amendments to the floor. Let's debate the amendments. Let's vote on the amendments. Let's prove the Senate can function in a very open process because in this particular case those vulnerable parents and those children, who are the next generation, really do matter and what we do really does affect them.

I thank the Presiding Officer, I thank my colleague from Maryland, and I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

MS. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I know we will be offering amendments throughout the afternoon, and we look forward to ample debate and discussion on them.

I want to reiterate my appreciation to Senator BURR for the way we have worked together on this bill. He was very generous in his comments to me and about me, and I appreciate it. But what I so appreciated in working with him is that his whole focus was: How do we protect these children? And his work to ensure that the children are safe when they are at the daycare, regardless of the size of the provider, was important. So, yes, we have good background checks. At the same time, we were looking at health and safety standards, making sure the staffs are at least trained in the elements of first aid, so that if the children needed help because they swallowed something—until the 911 responders could be there—they would have that training. That is really important.

Yet we had to look at it in a way in which we did not overregulate. So we wanted quality standards, but we did not want to have so many rules, so many regs—exactly what Senator ALEXANDER cautioned us about: Let's not overregulate so that we then stifle or end up shrinking the pool. So we, again, worked on what—the phrase “sensible center” comes from Colin Powell: that if we work hard and listen to each other, we can find that sensible center. So it was the balance between Federal standards but also local flexibility on the best way to achieve those standards, and also to help States pay

the bill for the training. One of the aspects of our bill is to set aside 3 percent of funding to expand access to improve the quality of care, especially for infants and toddlers—the most vulnerable populations because they cannot tell you things. They cannot tell you where they hurt or some of these other things.

In addition, the amounts States set aside for quality improvement also must be at least 10 percent within 5 years of enactment. And States must say what they choose to invest in. We hope not only to have reporting and accountability but to get an idea for best practices that we can circulate among providers. We think this will be important.

The other area we focused on was in the area Senator BURR talked about, providing protections for children who receive assistance. That is exactly what I heard in Maryland. This is all income based; in other words, your voucher. This is a means-tested program. But if your means change in the program, you could lose your daycare. So it was an actual disincentive from improving yourself or maybe taking a seasonal job. So if you had the opportunity perhaps to work in retail during the holiday season—exactly for your own family's holiday celebration—you were going to be tremendously disadvantaged because it would be a boost, it would look like you were going up, when actually your income might be the same if you have taken that part-time job.

We want to reward work. We want to reward personal responsibility. So we were able to provide that flexibility that when parents redetermine their eligibility, they will give them ample opportunity to do so. So if your child is in daycare, and you take that part-time job or your income goes up, you will not lose the daycare you have for that year or that determination. We thought that was important.

The other was meeting the needs of children with disabilities. This is a strong passion of Senator HARKIN, a well-known advocate for people with disabilities, and I know he will speak to that. But it will require States to examine: What are they doing to coordinate with the IDEA programs, again for preschool-age children with disabilities. Often a child who faces a disability is at a disadvantage because the daycare they are in does not promote learning.

I have a constituent in Maryland. She spoke at our press conference yesterday. Her name is Cathy Rivera. She is the mother of two children, ages 7 and 2. She is also a resource person working at the CentroNia family center, which is information services and also focuses on early childhood education.

Her little girl was born without an ear. That is rough going. So imagine being an infant, then a toddler, trying to learn a language, your family is bilingual—that could be a great asset,

but when you cannot really hear, and the doctors are doing the most for you to help you, you still need to be in an environment that acknowledges that and is helping with the learning in childcare, at your pace, your way, so that your language skills are also developing because language and brain development are tied together. So without the proper environment, this little girl would have been doubly disadvantaged—one, with the physical situation from birth, but then the learning situation because of where she was.

Well, fortunately—with her mother working in the field of daycare, working at an agency that provides information and resources, with the help of the childcare subsidy—this little girl could be in the daycare that she needs, to not only look out to see that her physical needs are being met but that her learning needs are being met.

Isn't that a great story? But here is a mother who is working, a bit strapped financially, but with her own sense of motherhood and personal responsibility, she found what she needed. The childcare subsidy was able to help her pay for the daycare, and now this little girl has a chance. It is going to be a challenging future for her, but she is up for this challenge.

That is what this is. This is not only about numbers and statistics. So when we talk about improving quality, we have really tried to take into consideration these needs.

Daycare is expensive. In Maryland, the Maryland Family Network tells me that they had—with all of the licensed daycares—over 23,000 children who were on the wait list for this program—not for daycare—that is even larger—but for this program.

So this is why we want to pass this bill and really be able to move forward on it. But, again, I am going to come back to this bipartisan effort of focusing on safety, security, and also learning readiness.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I will say more later.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, I want to take this opportunity to say to my colleagues, we are now at a point where we would like to consider amendments. So if you have improvements to this bill, it is now after lunch. Before you take a nap, come down to the Senate floor, offer your amendment. Let's talk about it, and let's process as many as we possibly can. It is our intent to consider amendments for the majority of the afternoon, at some point—with the cooperation and agreement of leaders on both sides—to set a time that we would then vote on the amendments that have been processed, hopefully continue to take some amendments early in the evening, but our intent would be not to have votes tonight so that the schedules are predictable, and to come back in the morning, with the leaders' agreement, at a specified time to consider the votes that might be

stacked, any additional amendments that need to be debated and voted on, and it would be Senator MIKULSKI's and my intent, and it is our goal—and when she has a goal, let me say to my colleagues, she will achieve that goal—it is our intent and our goal to finish this bill tomorrow afternoon.

We want to make sure we have accommodated every Member who has an amendment, every Member who wants to make an improvement to this bill, but we ask Members to come to the floor, preferably today, to introduce that, call it up, debate it, let us schedule in a queue of votes, and we will feel more confident of exactly the timeline we are on as that process starts.

I remind my colleagues that the key enhancements in this bill are it improves quality while simultaneously ensuring that Federal funds support low-income and at-risk children and facilities; two, it addresses the nutritional and physical activity needs of children in a childcare setting; three, it is strengthening coordination and the alignment to contribute a more comprehensive early childhood education and care system; four, it meets the needs of children with disabilities who require childcare; five, it provides protections for children and families who receive assistance; six, it safeguards the health and the safety of children.

I cannot think of points that are more important as it relates to changes to a bill that was created in 1996 and still embraces, I might say, the context that it was negotiated in, which was welfare reform.

How do we provide the avenue for more individuals to enjoy what great things this country has to offer for those who are willing to work? Welfare reform was a pathway, bipartisanly agreed to, to lead people from unemployment to employment and hopefully to continue to whatever degree of prosperity they chose to pursue.

We all know that means you have to have a partner and you have to have flexibility, whether that flexibility is being able to meet the hours that might put you up for a promotion or to get the skills you need to consider a different career or the next level. Every parent should probably look at this as I did with mine; that they are the single most important part. There are sacrifices every parent makes for themselves because of what they provide for their children. That is the right thing to do. But through this partnership, for 1.6 million children and for 900,000-plus families, we have now provided for over two decades a Federal program that helps make that decision so it is not either/or; they can pursue a career, they can pursue advancement, they can increase their skills, they can increase their education without sacrificing that Federal subsidy that provides them the ability to drop their kids off in the morning and those kids are taken care of.

This is a win-win. It is what welfare reform was written to do. I am proud

to work with my good friend Senator MIKULSKI to make sure we get this across the finish line. Come to the floor. Bring your amendments. Make this bill better. Let's debate them, let's vote them, but we are going to finish tomorrow afternoon.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I reiterate Senator BURR's request. People wanted an open amendment process. We are open. Come on and amend. We are looking forward to it. While we are waiting for our Members to come careening to the floor to offer amendments—by the way, 20 have been filed, so here we are.

I wish to comment on something else.

GIRL SCOUTS

You notice I am dressed in green today. I also have on a Girl Scout pin. Do I not look like a Girl Scout standing here? I feel like a Girl Scout. I was a Girl Scout. Once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout.

Today we are celebrating the 102nd anniversary of Girl Scouts in America. What started out as a group of 18 girls in Georgia, organized by Juliette Low, has grown into an organization of 3.2 million girls and women.

As a Girl Scout, I knew firsthand about what it was like learning, about leadership and service. I loved working on my badges. I liked the camaraderie of working with other girls on the various challenges we had. I was a child during World War II. The Girl Scout program run out of our parish was very important. It provided important activities for girls after school. There were comparable Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, just like we had the Daisies and the Girl Scouts.

These were important activities because in my community women were working as "Rosie the riveter." So these afterschool programs were critical so we could be in a safe environment. We learned wonderful skills. We learned about our responsibilities.

I cannot think enough about Ms. Helen Nimick, who was my Girl Scout leader. I wanted to grow up and be like Ms. Nimick, who seemed to know how to do 43 things with oatmeal boxes. I do not know if they did it in the days of the Presiding Officer; there is a little bit of an age difference between us.

But you know what I loved the most were our pledges. I will just say today, first of all, you know the Girl Scout promise: "To serve God and my country, to help people at all times, and live by the Girl Scout law." Pretty good. But here is the Girl Scout law. I actually carried this in my wallet. I will tell you why. Because if you follow

the Girl Scout law, you are in pretty good shape. By the way, I think over 90 percent of the women in the Senate were either a Daisy or a Girl Scout, but the Girl Scout law says this: "I will do my best to be honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and what I do, and to respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout, and a sister to every Boy Scout."

I think this is great. To Girl Scouts everywhere, whether they are Daisies or senior leadership, we say congratulations on the 102d anniversary. But I want to do a particular shout out to the leaders, people who give of their own time and their own dime to help young women learn about their country, the world they live in, working collegially and in comradeship, camaraderie with others.

I believe the values I learned as a Girl Scout, though I smile about it today, were the lessons of a lifetime. Quite frankly, if I can live up to the Girl Scout law, I think I will be a pretty good Senator. So hats off to Girl Scouts everywhere, a big thanks to the leaders who do it, and let's eat those cookies, even if you are on a different kind of program than they are often called for.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Madam President, let me admit I was not a Girl Scout. I guess I should have assumed BARBARA MIKULSKI was a Girl Scout because scouting has made a significant difference in the lives of so many, not just in America but globally.

It is many of the qualities that come from that experience that lead to some of our most important national leaders, both in the past and in the future. So I join her in recognizing this significant milestone for the Girl Scouts. I know it must be challenging in today's nutritional environment to actually fund everything off of cookies. But as we have seen the drastic change in the way they are marketed, I will assure you we are raising a generation of Girl Scouts who are the most creative in how they market and sell their products to fund their programs of any generation I have seen today.

I think when kids are challenged at that age to be their own entrepreneurs, it is good for this country. We should be proud as parents and we should continue to support programs such as Scouting.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, I wish to pay tribute to the Girl Scouts as the organization celebrates Girl Scout Day. One hundred and two years ago, on March 12, 1912, Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low founded the first chapter of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America in Savannah, GA. Today, the Girl Scouts count over 2 million girls as members, including

nearly 100,000 in my home State of New Jersey.

We all know and enjoy their incredibly successful—and delicious—Girl Scout Cookie program, but beyond the cookies, this program is the largest and most successful business run by girls in the world, earning nearly \$800 million a year. By participating in this program, girls are taught five essential entrepreneurial skills, including goal-setting, decision-making, money management, people skills, and business ethics. This has helped the Girl Scouts teach their members financial literacy and business skills, and has inspired generations of women business owners and executives.

The mission of the Girl Scouts has been and continues to be building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. In that respect, I commend the Girl Scouts for launching a program in 2012 known as Be a Friend First, or BFF, to tackle bullying among middle school girls. A recent study found that girls developed key relationship and leadership skills from this program, and that Hispanic girls experienced a particular benefit from the Girl Scouts' gender-specific program.

I would also like to applaud the Girl Scouts for their continuing efforts to encourage careers in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, STEM, fields. Only 1 year after they were founded, in 1913, the Girl Scouts began awarding their first merit badges in STEM fields, the electrician badge and the flyer badge. Today, the Girl Scouts continue to encourage girls to consider pursuing careers in STEM fields. For the United States to be able to continue to remain the world's leading innovator, the participation of women in STEM fields is critical. Therefore I commend them for their efforts towards increasing the participation of women in STEM careers and education.

On this Girl Scout Day, for these reasons and for many others, I applaud the Girl Scouts for the outstanding work that they do in our communities and for girls across America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. HELLER. I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. HELLER are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. HELLER. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HATCH. Madam President, I rise today to discuss my disappointment in

the recent turn of events involving the sustainable growth rate formula, or what we call the SGR or the doc fix. Enacted in 1997, the SGR was conceived as a means of trying to balance the budget by restraining health care costs in Medicare, but it was deeply flawed from the start. Its reimbursement cuts to physicians would cripple seniors' ability to get the quality health care they deserve from their doctors.

Consequently, since 2002, when the SGR came into effect, Congress has patched it on a regular basis, and there has been bipartisan support for doing so. These "patches" have frequently been cobbled together at the midnight hour between leadership of both parties and included in larger legislation, without the input of the Members or even going through the regular legislative process. Now, this perverse annual dark-of-night ritual has to stop. Seniors and physicians understand that. Republicans and Democrats in the House and Senate understand that.

For the better part of a year, Congress—to the surprise of many—worked to fully repeal the SGR and replace it with more reasonable reforms that moved Medicare's physician fee-for-service reimbursement system toward a system that rewards doctors for providing quality care based on outcomes, and we have made tremendous progress. Senator BAUCUS and I worked for months on a bill that sailed through the Finance Committee on a bipartisan basis. The two relevant House committees passed bipartisan legislation repealing the SGR as well.

Then, in a turn of events that is all too rare these days, the chairman and ranking members of the Senate Finance Committee, the House Ways and Means Committee, and the House Energy and Commerce Committee worked tirelessly to come up with one unified policy that House and Senate Democrats and Republicans could all support. Believe it or not, we succeeded. We succeeded by involving all stakeholders, including the influential American Medical Association, in a fair and equitable manner that resulted in near-unanimous support across the health care community. For the first time since its enactment in 1997, the House and Senate united behind a policy that gets rid of this flawed Medicare reimbursement system.

So, Madam President, if we have moved this far, what is the problem? Why am I disappointed? Well, I am going to tell you.

Last night I was informed that the majority leader is bringing straight to the floor of this body the very policy we successfully negotiated—tacking on what are known as the health care extenders which the Finance Committee passed but which were not included in what the House and Senate agreed upon with the SGR. But—and here is the problem—the Democrats have no plans whatsoever to pay for it. So Senate Democrats want to pass a bill that has a roughly \$177 billion price tag

without even trying to offset any of the cost. Sadly, these same Democrats don't seem to care that they have quickly turned what was a true bipartisan accomplishment into another partisan political ploy. This is deeply disappointing.

I am very sympathetic to those who say that since Congress has never let the SGR go into effect, we should not have to pay for it. But let's be honest—there is no way that right now a bill that would add close to \$200 billion to the deficit is ever going to pass the House. And I don't blame the House. This is reality.

Democrats in the Senate have blasted the House SGR repeal bill that is paid for by repealing ObamaCare's individual mandate. The Senate majority leader has said that what the House is doing has "no credibility" and that House Republicans "gotta find something else" to pay for it. But can't the very same thing be said of what the Senate Democrats are doing—that their plan has "no credibility" and that they have to find a way of paying for this if they are going to do it? I think we all know the answer to that.

I just don't understand how we have gotten here. I don't understand why there are these unfortunate attempts to poison a bipartisan product with needless partisanship. We all want to repeal the SGR, so let's dispense with the games and get back to work figuring out a real path forward and one that involves an offset.

What is even more astonishing is that Senate Democrats are proceeding in this manner on the very week some of my colleagues are trying to make the Senate work. Senators BURR and MIKULSKI have put forward a bill that the Senate is set to consider to reform the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program. That is an important bill—certainly to me because I was one of the few who rammed that through way back when and took a lot of flak in the process. But it has worked amazingly well.

Now Senators BURR and MIKULSKI have put forward this bill, after a lot of work by Senator ALEXANDER and Senator SCHUMER to get the Senate working again, to allow amendments and debate, and I have to say I commend them, and I think Senators BURR and MIKULSKI deserve great applause and commendation, as do Senators ALEXANDER and SCHUMER. That is what I don't understand.

Everybody here knows I have a record of working across the aisle, sometimes to the chagrin of Members of my own party and certainly sometimes to the irritation of some of our very far-right people in Utah. Why turn this bipartisan proposal into a partisan exercise when so many Senators want to work together to fix the problems the American people face each and every day?

Let me be clear. I support what House Republicans have proposed. It is a reasonable approach to paying for a

full repeal of the doc fix. Almost every week, the White House delays or repeals another part of ObamaCare, so it is time for the American people to get a reprieve as well. It is the right thing to do. But I am interested in a result.

I want to fix the SGR system once and for all, and I hope that after this pointless exercise designed for political cover we can come together to do what is right. Let's go back to our winning formula and get our bipartisan, bicameral negotiations underway to find a responsible path forward.

Look, I like both of our leaders. They are strong people. They have differing philosophies. There is much to commend both of them and I suppose some would say much to criticize in each case. But there is no reason for this type of ramming something through that has no chance of passing the House. Frankly, it doesn't have much chance of having any Republican support at this point because we believe this kind of a program has to be offset to literally be valid and to be viable. I think everybody here knows that, and so we have to find an offset to do it. If we can't find an offset, we have to keep the SGR alive until we do. But to make it into a partisan game at this point, after all the bipartisan work that has been done, is really a tragedy.

We were on the verge of getting this solved. I hope that doesn't happen this time because a lot of us have worked our guts out to get this to this point, on both sides of the aisle. It would be an absolute tragedy if we can't get the cooperation to get this through.

The Democrats, if they do not like the offset the House has come up with, although it seems to make sense to me, they control this body, can come up with an offset both sides can agree to. But we have to have an offset and we have to do this the right way or we will be right back at base one after all the work that has been put into it in a bipartisan way to get this done.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COONS). The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2812

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendment be set aside and I be allowed to call up my amendment No. 2812.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Wyoming [Mr. ENZI] proposes an amendment numbered 2812.

Mr. ENZI. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, to conduct a review of Federal early learning and care programs and make recommendations for streamlining the various programs)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. ____ REVIEW OF FEDERAL EARLY LEARNING AND CARE PROGRAMS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, shall conduct an interdepartmental review of all early learning and care programs in order to—

(1) develop a plan for the elimination of duplicative and overlapping programs, as identified by the Government Accountability Office's 2012 annual report (GAO-12-342SP); and

(2) make recommendations to Congress for streamlining all such programs.

(b) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and the heads of all Federal agencies that administer Federal early learning and care programs, shall submit to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the Committee on Education and the Workforce of the House of Representatives, a detailed report that outlines the efficiencies that can be achieved by, as well as specific recommendations for, eliminating duplication, overlap, and fragmentation among all Federal early learning and care programs.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, when the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program was first created in the 1990s, it was seen primarily as a way to help parents enter the workforce or get job training.

The program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, gets about \$5.2 billion a year in Federal funding plus State matching funds, although the fiscal year 2014 appropriation is approximately \$2.4 billion.

The last reauthorization of this program took place nearly 20 years ago. This bipartisan CCDBG reauthorization, the Mikulski-Burr-Harkin-Alexander bill, puts a greater emphasis on the quality of the childcare programs children are entering. The bipartisan bill would refocus the program on quality, not just access.

The legislation emphasizes the protection of vulnerable populations, incentivizing self-sufficiency and individual responsibility. The bill also improves coordination among Federal early childhood education programs.

As a block grant, States have a great deal of flexibility in how they administer child care and development block grant funds but are generally required to set health, safety, and quality guidelines, promote parental choice, assist parents in becoming independent through work promotion, and provide consumer information so parents can make decisions about their child's care. The money helps States provide grants to low-income parents to cover the cost of childcare and afterschool

care, typically through a voucher which parents can use at the home-based program or childcare center of their choice.

My amendment requires the Secretaries of Health and Human Services and Education to carry out an interdepartmental review of all early learning and childcare programs administered by the Federal Government—and we have lots of them.

We all agree the funding invested in early education programs saves taxpayers money down the road. So for a long time the Federal Government has been doing a lot to increase access to these important programs. Federal support for early learning and childcare developed over time to meet emerging needs, but at this point multiple Federal agencies administer this important investment through numerous programs.

What my amendment does is ask Health and Human Services and the Department of Education to report back to Congress with a plan for eliminating duplication and overlap, as well as a plan with ways we can streamline these programs.

Every year the Government Accountability Office, GAO, submits a report to Congress with recommendations for ways to reduce duplication, overlap, and fragmentation in Federal Governmental programs. In its 2012 annual report to Congress, GAO recommended the Department of Education and Health and Human Services should extend their coordination efforts to other Federal agencies with early learning and childcare programs to combat program fragmentation, simplify children's access to these services, collect the data necessary to coordinate operation of these programs, and identify and minimize overlap and duplication.

GAO identified 45 early learning and childcare programs funded by the Federal Government. Twelve of these programs explicitly provide only early learning or childcare services. These 45 programs are administered by multiple agencies, including the Department of Education, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Agriculture, Department of the Interior, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of Housing and Urban Development, the General Services Administration, and the Appalachian Regional Commission. When I was chairman of the HELP Committee, the late Senator Ted Kennedy and I worked to eliminate duplication and overlap in programs under our jurisdiction—we got it down from about 119 to 69—but could not look at any of the programs administered by other agencies. We knew there was room for streamlining programs at other agencies, but we couldn't work on it, which was frustrating and shows how far-flung some of these programs are. Let me report again: the 45 programs administered by multiple agencies, including not only Education but Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Inte-

rior, Justice, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, General Services Administration, and the Appalachian Regional Commission.

We have to believe we ought to be able to do some consolidation there and save some money and improve the quality of programs while we are at it.

In a recent GAO report issued on February 5, 2014, GAO noted that as of December 2013, Education and Health and Human Services has taken initial steps toward greater coordination but had not yet included all Federal agencies which administer these early learning and childcare programs in their established interdepartmental workgroup.

This amendment takes a further step in identifying fragmentation, overlap, duplication, and inefficiencies in the Federal Government's delivery of numerous learning and care programs beyond the Government Administration Organization's report. Streamlining programs to eliminate duplication is essential for program integrity and good governance but also for eliminating service gaps for eligible children.

We are doing a lot. We can do better with less through coordination and getting it down to where there are less sources and less places where there has to be permission, regulation, and oversight. We can do better for the kids, and all we are asking for with this is to come up with a plan. It doesn't force anything, but hopefully it is a plan we will pay attention to and not just put it on the shelf.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I first thank Senator ENZI again for working with us for a long time on the committee to put this bill together, and I thank him for this amendment.

Basically, GAO's 2012 annual report noted the Department of Education and Health and Human Services should be increasing their coordination efforts in dealing with childcare and early learning programs. This amendment would require them to collaborate and conduct a comprehensive review of the 45 programs which currently support early learning and childcare across the country. This would ensure better coordination, reduction in duplication, and effective programming for children.

I say to my friend from Wyoming, on Monday I was in my home State of Iowa, in Des Moines, visiting an early learning center. On Saturday, I was in Ames visiting an early learning center in preparation for this bill to be on the floor. Monday, I was meeting with everyone there. With all of the different funding streams which come through and all of the different cross-purposes, I finally said: Stop a minute. I am confused.

They said: If you are confused, so are we.

Even the people running the programs—everything has some different

thing they have to fill out paperwork for to qualify.

So I am particularly sensitive to the Senator's amendment, having just tried to wade through all of that just a couple days ago in Iowa.

I thank my friend from Wyoming. It is a good amendment and should be adopted. We certainly support the amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I also applaud my colleague Senator ENZI. This is a needed amendment. It makes the bill better.

I will note for my colleagues, most recently the 2014 Omnibus appropriations legislation created two new programs, including the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnerships Program funded at \$500 million and the Race to the Top pre-K program funded at \$250 million.

I point these out because both of these further underline the interactions which might exist with the current programs. I would think any attempt of this would be an administrative responsibility to find ways to consolidate, but clearly this is a case where more is not better.

This requires the Secretary to look at all these programs and find ways to consolidate in a way which provides a better outcome for those who are the beneficiaries. So I urge my colleagues to support this amendment.

I also say to my colleagues, through their staffs, it is probably the intent of the Senate to have some votes about 2:30. I think there are notifications going out on both sides, but I just want Members to be aware. We are trying to accommodate the afternoon schedules of both sides of the aisle on commitments they have, one at the White House and a Member's meeting on Ukraine this afternoon. So it is our intent right now to have up to two votes by 2:30 this afternoon.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, might I ask the Senator from Iowa and the Senator from North Carolina, is it not also likely, given the good progress we are making, we may be able to have another vote or two between 5 and 5:30 this afternoon so as not to interfere with meetings or the briefing many Senators are attending at 5:30?

Mr. BURR. I would say, it is our intent probably right before the Ukraine briefing to hopefully be in a position to dispose of about two additional amendments.

Mr. ALEXANDER. So that would be two votes at 2:30 and perhaps two more at probably about 5:15.

Mr. HARKIN. I concur.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I thank the Senators from Iowa and North Carolina.

I also thank the Senator from Wyoming for his leadership. For a number of years he was the ranking member of

the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee, and while he was there he focused on trying to help us spend our money more efficiently—which all of us want to do.

Sometimes we forget that Head Start is not the only early learning program we have in the country. It is the most famous. It is best known. It is very popular with most people. It is about \$8.6 billion, but the bill we are debating today, the child care and development block grant, is another \$5.3 billion. It is two-thirds the size of Head Start and affects 1.5 million children. And then there is another of \$5 billion or so of Federal funding for early learning and early childhood. Without getting into a debate about whether we should have new programs, I think there is a consensus among most of us that we should at least start by taking the money we are spending for early childhood and spend it wisely.

One step we took a few years ago was to create centers of excellence for Head Start. This was, I believe, in 2007. The idea there was that the Governor of each State would be permitted to pick at least two communities or cities where they were doing the best job of spending money in a coordinated way for early learning and childhood development. Not only are these 18 billion Federal dollars being spent, but many States have additional funding for early childhood, most States have kindergarten programs, and many States have programs for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds. The idea was to see if we could encourage Nashville or Denver or Des Moines to take a look at all the children between 0 and 6 and all the dollars being spent—public, private, Federal, State and local—and see who is doing the best job of putting that all together. It is always a problem with a big, complex country such as this when you have a decentralized government and there are several layers. There are lots of silos, and children don't live in silos. They are by themselves needing help and we need to find a way of getting the money to them. So the centers of excellence was a modest beginning to try to encourage better spending of what is up to \$18 billion of money already being spent.

I think Senator ENZI's amendment, which I strongly support, would give us more information about how to better spend the Federal dollars we already spend for early childhood. I simply wanted to call the attention of the Senate and others who may be paying attention to that centers of excellence program. In the committee chaired by the Senator from Iowa, we had excellent testimony from the representative from Denver who had one of the first centers of excellence. She talked about the progress they have made in taking all the available money and using it in the most effective way to help children.

I hope as we move along through the process of dealing with the debate about how do we do a better job of

early childhood education that we consider centers of excellence, and I hope Senator ENZI's amendment is adopted today because it will help us. It will make us a better steward of taxpayer dollars, and that means doing a better job of helping children.

Thank you, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

AMENDMENT NO. 2818

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, on behalf of Senator LANDRIEU, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the pending amendment and call up her amendment No. 2818.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN], for Ms. LANDRIEU, for herself and Ms. MIKULSKI, proposes an amendment numbered 2818.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To require a statewide child care disaster plan)

On page 98, strike line 15 and insert the following:

view.
“(U) DISASTER PREPAREDNESS.—
“(i) IN GENERAL.—The plan shall demonstrate the manner in which the State will address the needs of children in child care services provided through programs authorized under this subchapter, including the need for safe child care, during the period before, during, and after a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a major disaster or emergency (as such terms are defined in section 102 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5122)).

“(ii) STATEWIDE CHILD CARE DISASTER PLAN.—Such plan shall include a statewide child care disaster plan for coordination of activities and collaboration, in the event of an emergency or disaster described in clause (i), among the State agency with jurisdiction over human services, the agency with jurisdiction over State emergency planning, the State lead agency, the State agency with jurisdiction over licensing of child care providers, the local resource and referral organizations, the State resource and referral system, and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care as provided for under section 642B(b) of the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9837b(b)).

“(iii) DISASTER PLAN COMPONENTS.—The components of the disaster plan, for such an emergency or disaster, shall include—

“(I) guidelines for the continuation of child care services in the period following the emergency or disaster, including the provision of emergency and temporary child care services, and temporary operating standards for child care providers during that period;

“(II) evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, and lock-down procedures, and procedures for communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, and accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions; and

“(III) procedures for staff and volunteer training and practice drills.”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2822

Mr. HARKIN. On behalf of Senator FRANKEN, I call up his amendment No. 2822.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN], for Mr. FRANKEN, for himself, Ms. MURKOWSKI, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. BALDWIN, Mrs. MURRAY, and Mr. THUNE, proposes an amendment numbered 2822.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To reserve not less than 2 percent of the amount appropriated under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 in each fiscal year for payments to Indian tribes and tribal organizations)

On page 136, strike lines 8 and 9 and insert the following:

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (2)—

(i) by striking “The Secretary” and inserting the following:

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary”;

(ii) by striking “1 percent, and not more than 2 percent,” and inserting “2 percent”;

and

(iii) by adding at the end the following:

“(B) LIMITATIONS.—Notwithstanding subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall only reserve an amount that is greater than 2 percent of the amount appropriated under section 658B, for payments described in subparagraph (A), for a fiscal year (referred to in this subparagraph as the ‘reservation year’) if—

“(i) the amount appropriated under section 658B for the reservation year is greater than the amount appropriated under section 658B for fiscal year 2014; and

“(ii) the Secretary ensures that the amount allotted to States under subsection (b) for the reservation year is not less than the amount allotted to States under subsection (b) for fiscal year 2014.”; and

(B) by adding at the end the following:

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 2:30 p.m. today the Senate proceed to votes in relation to the following pending amendments, in the order listed: Enzi amendment No. 2812 and Franken amendment No. 2822; further, that no second-degree amendments be in order to either amendment prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the request?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to modify my request for unanimous consent that the second vote be a 10-minute vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Thank you.

AMENDMENT NO. 2822

I rise in strong support of the child care development and block grant, or CCDBG, and to urge my colleagues to support the amendment Senator MURKOWSKI and I put forward.

Our amendment would help strengthen CCDBG by making sure we are addressing some of our Nation’s communities that will benefit most from it, the people who are members of tribes or tribal organizations all over this Nation. American Indians experience exceptionally high unemployment levels compared with the rest of the Nation. Furthermore, American Indian children and youth experience some of the poorest educational outcomes in America. These are exactly the sort of challenges CCDBG is designed to address. Our amendment would lift the current ceiling on tribal childcare funding so CCDBG can go to where the funds are needed most. This would enable more funds to flow to tribes and tribal organizations but without reducing the amount that goes to States. The amendment specifies that the amount of CCDBG funds reserved for tribes only rises if the overall funding level for CCDBG goes above its current levels.

I thank our cosponsors, Senators MURRAY, THUNE, HIRONO, BALDWIN, and HEITKAMP, for their support of this amendment. I thank Senators HARKIN and ALEXANDER and Senators MIKULSKI and BURR for working together to bring this bill to the floor.

Thank you very much.

I would yield for my colleague from North Carolina.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I rise in strong support of the amendment, and I urge my colleagues—this is a reasonable improvement to the bill, and I think Senator FRANKEN stated it very well.

This amendment increases the amount of CCDBG funding set aside for tribes from not more than 2 percent to not less than 2 percent. It sounds like not much of a difference, but this has a tremendous impact on the predictability to tribes of the dollars that are going to be available to them.

So I would urge my colleagues to support the Franken-Murkowski amendment.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. I wish to join with Senator BURR in supporting the amendment.

AMENDMENT NO. 2812

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2812.

Mr. BURR. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. ROCKEFELLER) is necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HEITKAMP). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 72 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Alexander	Franken	Moran
Ayotte	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Baldwin	Graham	Murphy
Barrasso	Grassley	Murray
Begich	Hagan	Nelson
Bennet	Harkin	Paul
Blumenthal	Hatch	Portman
Blunt	Heinrich	Pryor
Booker	Heitkamp	Reed
Boozman	Heller	Reid
Boxer	Hirono	Risch
Brown	Hoeben	Roberts
Burr	Inhofe	Sanders
Cantwell	Isakson	Schatz
Cardin	Johanns	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Scott
Casey	Johnson (WI)	Sessions
Chambliss	Kaine	Shaheen
Coats	King	Shelby
Coburn	Kirk	Stabenow
Cochran	Klobuchar	Tester
Collins	Landrieu	Thune
Coons	Leahy	Toomey
Corker	Lee	Udall (CO)
Cornyn	Levin	Udall (NM)
Crapo	Manchin	Vitter
Cruz	Markey	Walsh
Donnelly	McCain	Warner
Durbin	McCaskill	Warren
Enzi	McConnell	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Menendez	Wicker
Fischer	Merkley	Wyden
Flake	Mikulski	

NOT VOTING—2

Rockefeller Rubio

The amendment (No. 2812) was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote, and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, for the benefit of Senators, I wish to ask something about the schedule. I would like to ask the Senator from Iowa, the Senator from North Carolina, and Senator MIKULSKI about the schedule of this bill. We are off to a fast start. We have the Franken amendment to be voted on now. This is my understanding of the schedule, and I want to see if I have it about right and then ask the chairman and the floor managers if it is right.

We expect there to be a colloquy from 3 o’clock until about 4 o’clock involving several Senators on the child care and development block grant. Then at 5:15 we expect to have a vote—at least one vote—and may accept others by voice and maybe have some nominations. Senators who have other amendments are free to come and

speaking between 4 o'clock and 5 o'clock. We would expect to have other votes tomorrow before lunch and finish the bill, it is my understanding, if we don't run into a snag, right after lunch tomorrow, about 2:00 or 2:15. That is the course we hope to be on.

I thank Chairman HARKIN and Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR for getting us off to a fast start. We have had about 20 amendments from both sides brought forward. We have been able to deal with them all.

Is that about right in terms of the schedule?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Yes, that sounds exactly how we are proceeding.

I thank the Senator from Tennessee for all the good work and the cooperation we have had on both sides. I think we are on a good path.

I reiterate and reemphasize that if anyone has amendments they want to offer and speak about, I would say between 4 and 5 is a good time to do it today. Then we will have two votes probably around 5:15. We are hoping maybe one can be voice voted at that time.

AMENDMENT NO. 2822

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to amendment No. 2822.

Mr. BURR. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO).

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 93, nays 6, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 73 Leg.]

YEAS—93

Alexander	Fischer	McConnell
Ayotte	Flake	Menendez
Baldwin	Franken	Merkley
Barrasso	Gillibrand	Mikulski
Begich	Graham	Moran
Bennet	Grassley	Murkowski
Blumenthal	Hagan	Murphy
Blunt	Harkin	Murray
Booker	Hatch	Nelson
Boozman	Heinrich	Portman
Boxer	Heitkamp	Pryor
Brown	Heller	Reed
Burr	Hirono	Reid
Cantwell	Hoeven	Risch
Cardin	Inhofe	Roberts
Carper	Isakson	Rockefeller
Casey	Johanns	Sanders
Chambliss	Johnson (SD)	Schatz
Coats	Johnson (WI)	Schumer
Coburn	Kaine	Scott
Cochran	King	Shaheen
Collins	Kirk	Stabenow
Coons	Klobuchar	Tester
Corker	Landrieu	Thune
Crapo	Leahy	Udall (CO)
Cruz	Levin	Udall (NM)
Donnelly	Manchin	Vitter
Durbin	Markey	
Enzi	McCain	
Feinstein	McCaskill	

Walsh	Warren	Wicker
Warner	Whitehouse	Wyden
NAYS—6		
Cornyn	Paul	Shelby
Lee	Sessions	Toomey
NOT VOTING—1		
Rubio		

The amendment (No. 2822) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, now, for the next hour, you are going to see the women of the Senate, on a bipartisan basis, speaking up on the issue of childcare. We have worked long and hard together.

I am going to withhold my time and turn to the Senator from Nebraska. What you need to realize is we are not a caucus. We disagree on many things, but on childcare we are united that this bill is a good bill. It could be improved through the amendment process. We recognize that.

So here we are, as a force trying to change the tone, trying to change the tide, and really help America's children.

I yield to Senator FISCHER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program. I thank the Senator from Maryland for her courtesy. In addition, I would like to address an amendment I have proposed to the underlying bill.

Promoting policies that enable job creation is a basic duty of the people's government. This bill we have on the floor before us now provides low-income, hard-working mothers and fathers with the opportunity to have quality childcare while they earn a steady paycheck or as they go back to school.

Americans work hard. They work hard to provide for their families and to make a better life for their children. As a mother and a grandmother I understand that knowing your children are safe and secure is essential to maintaining a steady job. We need to encourage responsible adults to enter and to maintain their presence in our workforce. That is why I appreciate my colleagues' work and their compromise on this bipartisan legislation. I also appreciate how this effort has helped to bring some regular order back to the processes of the Senate. I especially want to recognize Senators BARBARA MIKULSKI, LAMAR ALEXANDER, and RICHARD BURR, who I know worked very hard in a collaborative and bipartisan fashion in order to get this bill to the floor.

As part of that process, I filed a proposed amendment that I have with Senator KING and Senator RUBIO to the child care and development block grant reauthorization. Our bipartisan amendment is a commonsense solution to the FDA's overregulation of low-risk

health information technology. That includes mobile wellness apps, scheduling software, and electronic health records. Under current law, which was established in 1976, the FDA can apply its definition of a "medical device" to assert broad regulatory authority over a wide array of health IT, including applications that do not pose any threat to human safety.

Our amendment allows the FDA to keep its focus on regulating medical devices, while creating a modernized oversight framework for low-risk categories of health IT. Since proposing this amendment, I have had the opportunity to speak with Senator ALEXANDER, the ranking member of the Senate HELP Committee. I am happy to say he has expressed an interest in that amendment. That is identical to the language introduced as a stand-alone bill called the PROTECT Act.

I look forward to having the opportunity to work with him and committee members to advance the core ideas included in the PROTECT Act, because I believe with the guidance of the committee, and with the guidance of other Senators, we will be able to achieve another bipartisan success in this Chamber.

At Senator ALEXANDER's request, and in response to his kind offers to work collaboratively on the PROTECT Act, I have agreed not to formally offer this amendment to the bill on the floor, but I do look forward to working with the Senator from Tennessee and others to improve upon that.

Again, I thank the leadership of Senator MIKULSKI, Senator ALEXANDER, and Senator BURR on the important legislation before us today. I thank them for their work. I thank them for their courtesies in allowing me to rise and speak on this very important amendment. I also thank them and look forward to working with them on the PROTECT Act in the future.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I now yield 5 minutes to the Senator from New York, another cosponsor of the bill, Senator GILLIBRAND.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, I wish to start by thanking Senator MIKULSKI for championing the reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, which is a bipartisan bill that reflects the values of this country. It serves more than 1.5 million children nationwide every month, including over 120,000 children in New York State alone. I also thank Chairman HARKIN for his leadership in bringing this important legislation through the committee and to the floor.

Everywhere I go in my State of New York I listen to families. I hear the exact same sense of struggle from every single one of them, that they are doing everything they can do to get by,

to provide for their kids and give them the best possible chance to succeed. But no matter how hard they work, making ends meet is difficult. Their day-to-day expenses keep going, while their paychecks either stay the same, or, sadly, are diminished.

As a result, too many families feel they cannot get ahead. So for our economy to get going again, it has to face the reality that the face of the American workforce has changed. We still have workplace policies that reflect the realities of decades ago, in the 1950s and 1960s. But in fact, today, 48 percent of the workforce in my State are women.

In order for us to unleash the full potential of our economy, we have to recognize that women are the new more often breadwinners of too many families. They are the primary income earners for a growing share across America. For that reason, we have to focus on an immovable reality for working mothers. That is childcare.

Today, more women are going back to work sooner after having a child, creating a greater demand for affordable childcare that allows them to stay in their jobs. In 2012 New York ranked the second least affordable State in the Nation for full-time daycare for an infant, according to a report by Child Care Aware.

A two-parent family in New York spends an average of 16.5 percent of their annual income to care for an infant. For a single mom in New York, the cost was greater than 57 percent of her income. If you cannot afford childcare, as many middle-class families cannot, and you do not have a family option, the choice you are left with is to leave your job and stay home to care for your child. That means less income for working families, more women leaving the workforce and a weaker middle class. It does not have to be this way. We can keep more working mothers in their jobs and more children in quality daycare when we make it affordable.

Our policies must reflect today's reality that women have to work for a living. It is not a lifestyle choice for most working mothers, it is a fact of survival. That is why I support Senator MIKULSKI's outstanding bill, because it will make daycare more affordable for millions of children every single year. It is also why I am a cosponsor of Senator BOXER's amendment that will double the childcare tax credit families can take to cover the cost of childcare and make it refundable.

Making the tax credit refundable would help those who are working and struggling the most but do not earn enough to use the tax credit. It means more savings going right back into the pockets of working families.

I also have an amendment that will make middle-class tax cuts better for childcare expenses. It will let them deduct the cost of childcare as a business expense.

This proposal, called childcare deduction, will allow you to deduct up to

\$14,000 for two kids or more. That makes perfect sense, because in New York, the average daycare for a toddler is \$12,000; for an infant it is almost \$15,000. This will go a long way to making sure our hard-working middle-class families have the funds they need to provide for their kids.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I yield 5 minutes to the Senator from Michigan, also a sister social worker and a real advocate for good nutrition for children.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. President, first, as everyone else, I congratulate our leader on this issue and on so many issues, including having the right kind of appropriations process to invest the dollars that Americans work hard to earn, to make sure they are invested in ways that help families, children, and to help the middle class to be able to succeed in this country.

I thank Senator MIKULSKI, the senior Senator from Maryland. Her work on this issue, the child care and development block grant, has been extraordinary and bipartisan, as is all of her work. She is laser focused on creating opportunities for children and families to succeed.

I think all of, certainly, the women who are speaking today and hopefully all of our colleagues understand that quality, affordable childcare is not a frill. I realize the Presiding Officer has wonderful children as well and understands this is a necessity.

We care for our children. We want to make sure we are able to work, put a roof over their heads, food on the table, to be able to buy their school clothes and get them what they need, to be able to pay for college, and to be able to do all the things we want to do for ourselves, our children, and our families. The costs of childcare are part of that equation, being able to do those things for our families that we need to do.

The average cost of childcare for 2 children is \$14,872 a year. I have heard from my friend and colleague from New York that it was higher in New York. I am sure it is higher in many places. But, on average, across the country, families are having to come up with almost \$15,000 a year which equals, if they are working minimum wage, a 40-hour workweek, working full time for a year. Think about that. If someone is in a minimum-wage job—and hopefully we are going to change that by raising the minimum wage—trying to make it and they work for 1 year, that is the average childcare cost for two children. That is why this investment in children and families is so important. This is the highest household expense for many families.

In most States 1 year of daycare is more expensive than 1 year of tuition at a public university. We are all talking to parents. They are all worried about saving for college. With three

small grandchildren, I think how can I help be part of that process of saving for college. Yet 1 year of daycare is more expensive than 1 year of tuition at a public university. This is too much for many of our families to afford. Very difficult choices are being made, choices that families are agonizing over.

This is especially unaffordable for so many hard-working families who are trying to climb the ladder of opportunity, trying to get into the middle class or maybe holding on by their fingertips and trying to stay in the middle class. That is why we have child care and development block grants to be able to help families afford a necessity and something that is critical for our society, which is having safe, affordable, quality childcare for our children.

This is a critically important program signed into law by President George H. W. Bush that 1.6 million children every month rely on; 1.6 million children in our country and their parents rely on this every month.

States use this funding to help low-income families gain access to quality, affordable childcare and afterschool programs. These families are trying to make ends meet and make sure their children have the opportunities they need to be successful. I want to stress that this funding goes to parents who are working—are working—are training for work or are enrolled in school.

I believe the reason we have strong bipartisan support is people understand how critical it is to hard-working families. This is an investment in our families. It is an investment in America's moms and dads. Sixty-five percent of moms work outside the home. In fact, if they go back to work, they are earning, in Michigan, only 74 cents on every dollar. They don't get a discount on their childcare, just because women are only getting three-quarters of a salary. Somehow, they are still paying the full price, but this is particularly critical for women across America.

This program helps millions of families, as I indicated, especially moms—especially moms getting back to work without having to worry about whether their children are going to be safe. Talk about peace of mind, this is peace-of-mind legislation for moms and dads to make sure their children will have a quality place, affordable place, and a safe place to be while they are working to earn a living for their families.

It has now been 24 years since this law was signed by President Bush, 18 years since it was last reauthorized. It is time to update it to reflect the changing conditions and challenges for our families.

This bipartisan reauthorization addresses issues facing families who need childcare. It improves program quality, making sure funds go to families in need; ensures children and childcare get the things they need to succeed: good nutrition, which is so critical for

their growth, physical activity, well-being by developing guidelines and incorporating health and wellness training for professional development; making sure children's needs are addressed when children have disabilities. It is very important for them and their families, making sure all childcare providers are properly trained to care for children and have been screened. That means first aid, CPR, how to prevent sudden infant death syndrome, child abuse, and undergoing a background check.

The bottom line is this is a bill that we need to pass. I am grateful and appreciative of the bipartisan support that has gotten us to this point, and the 45 national organizations that support it, including the Afterschool Alliance, the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, the National Association for Family Child Care, Teach for America, United Way Worldwide, and so many others.

I am pleased to join with all of my colleagues and urge them that we pass this bill as quickly as possible.

Again, congratulations to our leader, the senior Senator from Maryland, who has gotten us to this point. I know we will get it all the way through the process.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I yield the floor to Senator BALDWIN of Wisconsin, one of our newest Members but not new to this issue. Her record in the House on advocacy for children is well-known and respected.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. In America, we know that quality education and a fair shot at work is the path to the middle class, economic security, and getting ahead. Today we have an opportunity to make an important bipartisan action to help strengthen that path to the middle class.

For many families in this country, quality, affordable childcare is a challenge they struggle with every morning. This is why President George H. W. Bush signed the child care and development block grant law in 1990, to ensure that working families have access to quality, affordable childcare.

Today I join a bipartisan group of my Senate colleagues in calling for reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act because of the support it provides working families across this country and across the State of Wisconsin, my home State.

I thank HELP Committee Chairman HARKIN and Ranking Member ALEXANDER, and Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR for their working across party lines to move this important legislation forward.

This bipartisan work is an endorsement of our shared responsibility to build a shared path to the middle class that begins by investing in affordable childcare and high-quality early learning programs.

I am proud to say that Wisconsin has long been a leader in investing in our children early. Education for 4-year-olds was part of Wisconsin's Constitution in 1845, and the first kindergarten in the United States was founded in Watertown, WI, in 1856. Wisconsin is nearing universal 4K, with over 90 percent of school districts offering kindergarten for 4-year-olds.

My State has also recognized the importance of effective collaborations to support early childhood care and education. Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners is a statewide partnership representing over 50 public and private agencies, led by Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction, with the goal of providing every child access to a comprehensive delivery system for high-quality education and care.

I am proud that my State has undertaken a community approach to implementing high-quality childcare and early education. More work remains to be done, however, both in Wisconsin and nationwide to ensure high-quality childcare and education is accessible to every family.

Our Nation continues to recover from the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression. As our country continues this recovery, families have had to get by with less. Americans are in need of affordable childcare now more than ever. My home State of Wisconsin is no exception to this trend. Today, many parents are in the workforce, including over 70 percent of mothers in Wisconsin. For many hardworking middle-class families, childcare is necessary but also expensive. For millions of families in the United States, childcare is their single largest household expense at nearly \$15,000 per year.

In Wisconsin, the cost of childcare for an infant is approximately 40 percent of a single mother's median income. Two-parent families can expect to spend more than 10 percent of their income on childcare.

Further, in Wisconsin, nearly one-third of children receiving the child care and development block grant funding are under the age of 3, making this a truly sound investment in those crucial years of early life.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act is a bipartisan effort to reauthorize, reform, and revitalize the block grant program by strengthening Federal safety standards and placing a greater focus on the quality of childcare programs.

This investment in affordable quality childcare will help more than 1.5 million children, including over 30,000 children in Wisconsin.

I once again thank my colleagues for working in a bipartisan manner to guide us in reauthorizing this vital legislation. High-quality childcare and education is essential to the future success of our children and our overall success as a nation.

I am proud to support this legislation as it focuses on improving the quality

and safety of childcare programs, focuses on supporting infants and toddlers with high-quality care, and reflects the realities of working families in this difficult economic environment. But, as importantly, I am proud to join a bipartisan effort in Washington that is squarely focused on both parties working together to build a stronger future for our middle class.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

AMENDMENTS NOS. 2813 AND 2814 EN BLOC

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent to make pending Landrieu amendments No. 2813 and No. 2814.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendments en bloc.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Maryland [Ms. MIKULSKI], for Ms. LANDRIEU, for herself, Mr. GRASSLEY, and Mr. INHOFE, proposes an amendment numbered 2813.

The Senator from Maryland [Ms. MIKULSKI], for Ms. LANDRIEU, for herself, Mr. BLUNT, and Mr. INHOFE, proposes an amendment numbered 2814.

Ms. MIKULSKI. I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendments be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2813

(Purpose: To allow children in foster care to receive services under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 while their families (including foster families) are taking necessary action to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements)

On page 82, lines 9 and 10, strike "to receive services under this subchapter while their families" and insert "and children in foster care to receive services under this subchapter while their families (including foster families)".

AMENDMENT NO. 2814

(Purpose: To require the State plan to describe how the State will coordinate the services supported to carry out the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 with State agencies and programs serving children in foster care and the foster families of such children)

On page 93, strike lines 3 and 4 and insert the following:

11432(g)(1)(J)(ii);

"(VII) State agencies and programs serving children in foster care and the foster families of such children; and

"(VIII) other Federal programs

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I note that on the floor are three outstanding Senators who wish to speak on this bill: Senator CANTWELL, Senator MURKOWSKI, and Senator COLLINS. They come as the deans of the Republican women. I ask unanimous consent that they each be allowed to speak for 5 minutes in the order in which I stated: Senator CANTWELL, Senator MURKOWSKI, and then Senator COLLINS.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I thank Chairman HARKIN and certainly

Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR for their leadership on this bipartisan issue but especially Senator MIKULSKI for her constant leadership in making sure families in America are cared for.

This is important bipartisan legislation, and the reauthorization of this legislation—the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014—will help ensure that families have access to quality, affordable childcare.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant Program serves more than 1.6 million children per month nationwide. In my State it serves more than 39,000 children per month. With the support of these grants, parents can work, look for work, and participate in job-training programs while their children receive affordable childcare at quality centers or in the child's home.

The child care and development block grants are a primary source of Federal support for childcare assistance, and they play a key role in promoting healthy development of children, especially at young ages. Research on the effects of early childhood development has continually shown that the foundation provided by early learning and childcare networks can prevent the achievement gaps at a young age. This bill enables States to invest in the programs that have proven to work for children and families.

In Washington more than half of the children served by the child care and development block grants are younger than 4 years old, so in my State these grants are vital for preparing our youngest children with the support and skills they need to stay ahead once they enter into kindergarten.

Professor Cathryn Booth-LaForce, at the University of Washington, said:

Child care affects so many children that for society at large, even small effects are important.

This bill would provide an additional 22,000 children across our Nation with childcare. That is a major effect. Expanding access to quality care can help thousands more children across the Nation get a running start on school. By preventing achievement gaps for our youngest children, we are creating successful students and building a skilled workforce for the future.

This bill allows Washington to make the important investments in our youngest learners and in our future economy. So I am so proud to be here in support of this bipartisan effort, and again I thank Senator MIKULSKI, Senator BURR, and others for working together at a time when people didn't think this level of compromise would result in such an important piece of legislation moving forward.

Once again I particularly wish to thank the dean of the women Senators, Senator MIKULSKI, for this effort and encourage my colleagues to support this bill, S. 1086, and make sure we get it passed before the end of this week.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I, too, am pleased to rise today to join my fellow women Senators on the floor this afternoon to speak in support of the bipartisan Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. I also commend Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR on their leadership in developing a truly bipartisan bill as we are moving forward. They have worked diligently and they have worked in a positive and constructive manner that does credit to the Senate operations. I also would like to recognize and commend Senator HARKIN and Senator ALEXANDER, as they have brought this bill through the committee and onto the floor.

I believe this legislation walks that line between asking the States, our tribes, and providers to plan ways to improve childcare quality without actually dictating the who and how and the what of every aspect of childcare. What the bill really does is it strengthens the ways in which providers can combine CCDBG, Head Start, title I, and IDEA funds to serve more kids, and if we can serve more kids, that is all good. It asks them to take an updated look at how they serve children with disabilities and how they will address nutrition and fitness and health and safety issues, but it will continue to let them figure out the best ways to achieve the goals, and that really does make sense.

In addition, as a result of the bipartisan nature of how this bill has come together, Alaskan voices were heard on this, and Alaskan concerns about several provisions in the original draft of the bill were addressed. For example, States that will be required to perform health, safety, and fire inspections may delegate to qualified agencies those inspections that require specialized expertise. That helps us in Alaska.

The committee report clarified that States' disaster preparedness standards include specific mention of children with disabilities and family reunification.

I was pleased to work with my colleague from Hawaii, Senator HIRONO, to make sure the bill managers included the technical amendments she had requested, which ensured that Native Hawaiian children were not inadvertently left out.

I again thank Senators MIKULSKI, BURR, ALEXANDER, and HARKIN for accepting those amendments that have made this bill that much better.

Mr. President, ensuring that families and children are well served by the childcare they pay for, in part with CCDBG assistance, is an important task before the Congress because this is not just about daycare or early learning, as important as those topics are. The fact is that access to high-quality, safe, and affordable childcare is really the key component when we

are talking about those things that build strong economies and strong American communities.

This assistance allows parents to get the education or the training they need to qualify for a good job. It allows them to accept and keep a good job that will help pay those bills. It helps employers hire qualified employees who are then able to work. It helps the children get the foundation they need both academically and socially to be prepared to succeed in school and life.

Getting CCDBG-funded childcare up to speed with the 21st century is a key element in addressing income inequality and the deep recession that is still present for so many low-income American families. This is especially true for American Indian and Alaska Native families. American Indians and Alaska Natives experience exceptionally high unemployment levels compared to the rest of the Nation. I think the Presiding Officer knows this from his State, but in many regions of Alaska unemployment among our Native people is more than double our statewide rate. In the lower 48, unemployment on our Indian reservations was at approximately 50 percent in 2012.

We also know that high-quality early education can have an important and positive effect on the often very difficult academic and social outcomes we can see with our American Indians and our Alaska Native children if they do not have some of these foundational opportunities before them. So increasing these families' access to quality early education can have an important, positive effect on these children by improving their academic outcomes and their economic opportunities and really bringing hope to the community.

I thank the Senators on the floor for supporting the amendment we just had in front of us. Senator FRANKEN and I had offered the tribal set-aside. This change, which moves the set-aside from a ceiling to a floor, will provide tribes with an opportunity to work with HHS to receive additional support for the childcare opportunities that are so needed in Indian Country.

I am proud of the work we are doing in the Senate this week. We could have hotlined this bill and passed it by unanimous consent, but I think the path we have taken is the right one in bringing the bill to the floor and giving each Member the opportunity to be heard on ways to improve the bill. Holding votes on amendments in the regular order is the right thing to do. I applaud the chairwoman and those who have worked so hard, and I look forward to supporting this bill as we see its conclusion.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I am pleased to join my colleagues this afternoon in expressing support for the

reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program, and I too commend Senator MIKULSKI, Senator BURR, Senator HARKIN, and Senator ALEXANDER for crafting this bipartisan bill and bringing it to the Senate floor for debate and amendment.

Childcare for working parents is essential to families throughout the Nation, and Maine is no exception. For years the CCDBG Program has assisted low-income parents in affording childcare. The support provided by this important program enables parents to obtain needed care for their children so they may work or improve their own skills and education.

Mr. President, 2,600 children from 1,800 Maine families receive Federal childcare subsidies through this program. Particularly during these difficult economic times, this program goes a long way in helping families in Maine and across the country.

I have seen firsthand the impact of high-quality early learning on a child's ability to succeed and grow. Educare Central Maine, located in Waterville, which I visited a few years ago, is a state-of-the-art early learning center that serves more than 200 mostly low-income children from birth to age 5. Almost half of these children come from families that are eligible for assistance, and many rely on the CCDBG voucher to help cover the cost of their attending Educare. Educare is a great example of quality childcare in my State and of the real impact of this program's funding at work in our communities.

As I saw at Educare in Waterville, the vouchers provided under this program allow parents to choose the best childcare setting for their children. That is a critical aspect of this program. Vouchers give parents the flexibility they want and need to make the best choice for their children about the kind of care that best serves their needs, whether it is at a childcare center, at a family care home, or with a relative or friend. The voucher program helps to keep the decisions in the hands of parents.

I am also pleased this reauthorization requires coordination among the early learning advisory councils and Head Start and the IDEA programs that serve children with special needs. Aligning these programs will help to improve the quality of all services offered for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

High-quality early learning experiences help ensure that children are well prepared for school. This bill improves the current program by making sure those providers receiving funding are qualified, receive training, and are regularly inspected and monitored.

I also express my gratitude to the members of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee for including in this legislation provisions from the Child Care Infant Mortality Prevention Act. That is a bill I intro-

duced with the Senator from California, DIANNE FEINSTEIN. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics, half of the approximately 4,500 sudden infant death syndrome cases in the United States are entirely preventable with effective training and implementation of correct sleep practices. I am very pleased this reauthorization includes sudden infant death syndrome prevention and safe sleeping practices among the new health and safety training topics for providers.

Childcare is not only important to the developmental health of our children but also to the well-being of their parents. When parents know their children have a place to go where they will be safe and where they will learn, then parents have the peace of mind to earn a living to support their families.

Balancing the need to work with the need for childcare can be very difficult. At times, a parent's salary would be almost completely offset by the cost of childcare in a low-income family. This bill will help more parents get the support they need while reinforcing the requirement for high-quality care in healthy, stimulating, and safe environments.

Mr. President, I urge all of my colleagues to support this reauthorization bill.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I thank the Senators from Maine and Alaska for their comments, as well as the Senator from Washington State. Wasn't it impressive that for the last hour, from both sides of the aisle, the women of the Senate have spoken out. Yet this bill is not a woman's bill. This is a family bill, where the men and women of the Senate came together on a bipartisan basis and have developed a framework for a sensible, affordable reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act.

I am so pleased to be a part of this with Senator HARKIN, chairman of the health and education committee, Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, and Senator RICHARD BURR, my counterpart on the subcommittee, where we worked so hard to do this.

We the women of the Senate often joke, but it is no laughing matter when we say we work on the macro issues of our economy and of our national security. But we also work on the macaroni and cheese issues affecting America's families, and there is no bigger macaroni and cheese issue than general education, and of course early childhood education, which occurs both in the home—remember, the first teachers are always the family—and then childcare. With now more than 40 percent of American women in the workforce, childcare is indeed a compelling issue.

Childcare is one of the most important decisions a parent can make in raising their child. Yet when one asks

who is worried about childcare or when there is a single mom working double shifts because she might make the minimum wage and she is trying to hold body and soul together or a married couple where the wife is working in the marketplace as a lab technician and the father has a job which might have him commuting more than 2 hours a day one way, they need to be able to have affordable childhood care. What about the police officer who works the night shift? When we say "police officer," it could be female or male.

Our bill helps lift the burden, giving families and children the childcare they need. This is why I am so proud the Senate women have joined me to support this bill. Many families want childcare which is reliable, undeniable, safe, affordable, and accessible. This bill does just that.

So how does it work? The Federal Government provides States and Indian tribes with funding. This funding is used to help lower-income families afford childcare while their parents work or train for work. Families are given vouchers based on their income level to help cover the cost of care. These vouchers can be used by parents for care in a childcare home, care in a relative's home or in a child care center.

Every month the CCDBG Program helps more than 1.5 million American children. In my own home State of Maryland, 20,000 children are served monthly; 20,000 families benefit from this.

So why is the program important? Childcare is expensive. Even when parents are contributing to childcare, it is often one of their highest expenditures. On average, Maryland families spend 20 percent of their family income on child care. Maryland has 54,000 working moms with infants under the age of 1 year. The childcare for this is \$13,000 a year. We have 148,000 single moms with children under the age of 18. We have 200,000 working moms with children under the age of 6. Childcare for them for a 4-year-old is about \$9,000 a year. This is more than what it costs to go to a community college. This is what it costs to go to more than some of the campuses at the University of Maryland.

Childcare is expensive. Taking care of children who are preschool is expensive because in order to do the right thing they have to have trained staff who not only provide a safe environment for the children, but the kind of environment which nurtures their development, develops their mind, and prepares them for school. This is why we focused on high-quality childcare.

Safeguarding their health and safety, ensuring children have a continuity of care, making sure their nutritional concerns are also addressed. We have done this, again, on a bipartisan basis to make sure when we provide childcare, and we also provide local flexibility.

The needs in a rural State like Utah or Montana are different than Maryland or New York. Look at the lead sponsors of this bill: Tennessee, North Carolina, Iowa, Maryland. So we provide the local flexibility which is so important.

This bill will make sure we have strong background checks to make sure the children are safe. We are going to make sure they meet certain basic health requirements where the staff knows basic first aid. We are also going to make sure there is money for training and curriculum development so each child benefits in a safe learning environment.

There is much more I could say about this bill, but the most important is this. Let's get our amendments done and let's move it. I am proud of what we have done, and I really think that if we work together, we can offer our amendments and be done by sometime tomorrow.

So I again reach out to all of my colleagues. We have a good bill. It is a bill which helps families and, at the same time, it does not really increase bureaucracy.

I yield the floor and look forward to a continuing debate on the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BROWN). The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

AMENDMENT NO. 2824 AND AMENDMENT NO. 2809

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the pending amendments be set aside, and call up the following amendments: Bennet-Isakson No. 2824; and, Boxer-Burr No. 2809.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN], for Mr. BENNET and Mr. ISAKSON, proposes an amendment numbered 2824;

The Senator from Iowa [Mr. HARKIN], for Mrs. BOXER and Mr. BURR, proposes amendment numbered 2809.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendments be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendments are as follows:

AMENDMENT NO. 2824

(Purpose: To require States that elect to combine funding for early childhood education and care to describe the manner in which they use the combined funding)

On page 91, line 17, insert "efficiently" before "coordinate".

On page 93, strike line 9 and insert the following:

"(ii) OPTIONAL USE OF COMBINED FUNDS.—If the State elects to combine funding for the services supported to carry out this subchapter with funding for any program described in subclauses (I) through (VII) of clause (i), the plan shall describe how the State will combine the multiple sets of funding and use the combined funding.

"(iii) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Noth-

On page 128, line 16, strike "chapter; and" and insert "chapter;".

On page 128, strike line 22 and insert the following:

ance with this subchapter.

"(5) after consultation with the Secretary of Education and the heads of any other Federal agencies involved, issue guidance, and disseminate information on best practices, regarding use of funding combined by States as described in section 658E(c)(2)(O)(ii), consistent with law other than this subchapter."; and

AMENDMENT NO. 2809

(Purpose: To amend the Crime Control Act of 1990 to improve the quality of background checks for Federal agencies hiring, or contracting to hire, individuals to provide child care services)

At the appropriate place, insert the following:

SEC. . . SAFE CHILD CARE ACT.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the "Safe Child Care Act of 2014".

(b) BACKGROUND CHECKS.—Section 231 of the Crime Control Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 13041) is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)—

(A) in paragraph (1), by striking "subsection (b)(3)" and inserting "paragraph (3)"; and

(B) by redesignating paragraph (2) as paragraph (4);

(2) by moving paragraphs (2) and (3) of subsection (b) to subsection (a), and inserting them after paragraph (1) of that subsection;

(3) in subsection (a)(3), as redesignated by paragraph (2) of this subsection, by striking "subsection (a)(1)" and inserting "paragraph (1)";

(4) in subsection (b), by striking paragraph (1) and inserting the following:

"(1) A background check required by subsection (a) shall be initiated through the personnel programs of the applicable Federal agencies.

"(2) A background check for a child care staff member under subsection (a) shall include—

"(A) a search, including a fingerprint check, of the State criminal registry or repository in—

"(i) the State where the child care staff member resides; and

"(ii) each State where the child care staff member previously resided during the longer of—

"(I) the 10-year period ending on the date on which the background check is initiated; or

"(II) the period beginning on the date on which the child care staff member attained 18 years of age and ending on the date on which the background check is initiated;

"(B) a search of State-based child abuse and neglect registries and databases in—

"(i) the State where the child care staff member resides; and

"(ii) each State where the child care staff member previously resided during the longer of—

"(I) the 10-year period ending on the date on which the background check is initiated; or

"(II) the period beginning on the date on which the child care staff member attained 18 years of age and ending on the date on which the background check is initiated;

"(C) a search of the National Crime Information Center database;

"(D) a Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using the Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System;

"(E) a search of the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 (42 U.S.C. 16901 et seq.); and

"(F) a search of the State sex offender registry established under that Act in—

"(i) the State where the child care staff member resides; and

"(ii) each State where the child care staff member previously resided during the longer of—

"(I) the 10-year period ending on the date on which the background check is initiated; or

"(II) the period beginning on the date on which the child care staff member attained 18 years of age and ending on the date on which the background check is initiated.

"(3) A child care staff member shall be ineligible for employment by a child care provider if such individual—

"(A) refuses to consent to the background check described in subsection (a);

"(B) makes a false statement in connection with such background check;

"(C) is registered, or is required to be registered, on a State sex offender registry or the National Sex Offender Registry established under the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006; or

"(D) has been convicted of a felony consisting of—

"(i) murder, as described in section 1111 of title 18, United States Code;

"(ii) child abuse or neglect;

"(iii) a crime against children, including child pornography;

"(iv) spousal abuse;

"(v) a crime involving rape or sexual assault;

"(vi) kidnapping;

"(vii) arson;

"(viii) physical assault or battery; or

"(ix) subject to paragraph (5)(D), a drug-related offense committed during the preceding 5 years.

"(4)(A) A child care provider covered by paragraph (3) shall submit a request, to the appropriate State agency designated by a State, for a background check described in subsection (a), for each child care staff member (including prospective child care staff members) of the provider.

"(B) In the case of an individual who is hired as a child care staff member before the date of enactment of the Safe Child Care Act of 2014, the provider shall submit such a request—

"(i) prior to the last day of the second full fiscal year after that date of enactment; and

"(ii) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this subparagraph for that staff member.

"(C) In the case of an individual who is a prospective child care staff member on or after that date of enactment, the provider shall submit such a request—

"(i) prior to the date the individual becomes a child care staff member of the provider; and

"(ii) not less often than once during each 5-year period following the first submission date under this subparagraph for that staff member.

"(5)(A) The State shall—

"(i) carry out the request of a child care provider for a background check described in subsection (a) as expeditiously as possible; and

"(ii) in accordance with subparagraph (B) of this paragraph, provide the results of the background check to—

"(I) the child care provider; and

"(II) the current or prospective child care staff member for whom the background check is conducted.

"(B)(i) The State shall provide the results of a background check to a child care provider as required under subparagraph (A)(ii)(I) in a statement that—

"(I) indicates whether the current or prospective child care staff member for whom

the background check is conducted is eligible or ineligible for employment by a child care provider; and

“(II) does not reveal any disqualifying crime or other related information regarding the current or prospective child care staff member.

“(ii) If a current or prospective child care staff member is ineligible for employment by a child care provider due to a background check described in subsection (a), the State shall provide the results of the background check to the current or prospective child care staff member as required under subparagraph (A)(i)(II) in a criminal background report that includes information relating to each disqualifying crime.

“(iii) A State—

“(I) may not publicly release or share the results of an individual background check described in subsection (a); and

“(II) may include the results of background checks described in subsection (a) in the development or dissemination of local or statewide data relating to background checks if the results are not individually identifiable.

“(C)(i) The State shall provide for a process by which a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) may appeal the results of a background check required under subsection (a) to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in the criminal background report of the staff member.

“(ii) The State shall ensure that—

“(I) the appeals process is completed in a timely manner for each child care staff member;

“(II) each child care staff member is given notice of the opportunity to appeal; and

“(III) each child care staff member who wishes to challenge the accuracy or completeness of the information in the criminal background report of the child care staff member is given instructions about how to complete the appeals process.

“(D)(i) The State may allow for a review process through which the State may determine that a child care staff member (including a prospective child care staff member) disqualified for a crime specified in paragraph (3)(D)(ix) is eligible for employment by a child care provider, notwithstanding paragraph (3).

“(ii) The review process under this subparagraph shall be consistent with title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000e et seq.).

“(E) Nothing in this section shall be construed to create a private right of action against a child care provider if the child care provider is in compliance with this section.

“(F) This section shall apply to each State that receives funding under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858 et seq.).

“(6) Fees that the State may charge for the costs of conducting a background check as required by subsection (a) shall not exceed the actual costs to the State for the administration of such background checks.

“(7) Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to prevent a Federal agency from disqualifying an individual as a child care staff member based on a conviction of the individual for a crime not specifically listed in this subsection that bears upon the fitness of an individual to provide care for and have responsibility for the safety and well-being of children.

“(8) In this subsection—

“(A) the term ‘child care provider’ means an agency of the Federal Government, or a unit or contractor with the Federal Government that is operating a facility, described in subsection (a); and

“(B) the term ‘child care staff member’ means an individual who is hired, or seeks to

be hired, by a child care provider to be involved with the provision of child care services, as described in subsection (a).”; and

(5) by striking subsection (c) and inserting the following:

“(c) SUSPENSION PENDING DISPOSITION OF CRIMINAL CASE.—In the case of an incident in which an individual has been charged with an offense described in subsection (b)(3)(D) and the charge has not yet been disposed of, an employer may suspend an employee from having any contact with children while on the job until the case is resolved.”.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1 of the second full fiscal year after the date of enactment of this Act.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 5:15 p.m., the Senate proceed to vote in relation to the following amendments in the order listed: Landrieu No. 2818; Landrieu-Grassley No. 2813; Landrieu-Blunt No. 2814; and Bennett-Isakson No. 2824; further, that no second-degree amendments be in order to any of these amendments prior to the votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. For the information of all Senators, it is our understanding that only one of these four amendments will be subject to a rollcall vote, Landrieu No. 2818, and the others will hopefully be done by voice votes at 5:15.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that upon disposition of the Bennet-Isakson amendment, the Senate proceed to executive session for consideration of the following nominations en bloc: Calendar Nos. 682, 617, 614, 545; that the Senate proceed to vote in the order listed without intervening action or debate on the nominations; the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order; that any related statements be printed in the RECORD; that the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, would the Senator yield 2 minutes?

I thank the Senator from Iowa for his generosity spirit, and I rise in strong support of the bill.

Since 1990 this important block grant has helped States provide vouchers to our low-income families to help them afford quality childcare programs. We all know how important that is.

With over 70 percent of moms in today’s workforce, it certainly is a critical issue for our children and their families and for our economy.

I have been involved in this issue both when I was a young mom and now as an older grandmother. Childcare can be very expensive. The average low-in-

come family spends over 32 percent of their income on childcare every month and about the same for their rent. They don’t have much left over. It is very difficult. In California we have almost 6 million children whose parents are working, and in our State we were able to help over 100,000 children through this very important program.

I commend the sponsors of this bill, the HELP Committee, for the great work they have done. I have a couple of amendments, and I will finish in just a moment.

Senator BURR and I have proposed amendment No. 2809, which simply ensures that all childcare programs on Federal facilities, such as military bases, conduct the same comprehensive background checks the bill already requires of childcare providers on State land. So it is like a little bit of an oversight that was left out.

So we make sure if there is a childcare center on Federal lands—and, by the way, there are many—it is taken care of. Unfortunately, we have had experiences of all kinds of assaults on Federal lands, and I don’t need to go into that.

Amendment No. 2810 would help more parents afford quality childcare by increasing the child and dependent care tax credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per child, and making it refundable.

I do hope we all support the underlying bill, and I thank the Senator from Iowa for his generosity.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in the last few weeks I have come to the floor many times to speak about how the Senate has deteriorated from being the deliberative body it is supposed to be. Considering the comity on the floor on this bill under the direction of Senator HARKIN, my colleague from Iowa, and other people, this is probably not the most appropriate time to give a speech like this. But we still have problems in the Senate and I wish to address them.

We need to restore the Senate as a deliberative body. I am very concerned the Senate is no longer living up to its reputation as the “World’s Greatest Deliberative Body.”

I have outlined how the Senate ought to function by quoting at length the writings of the primary architect of the U.S. Constitution James Madison. When trying to understand what the authors of the Constitution intended the role of the Senate to be, we can’t do any better than James Madison, the father of the Constitution.

The writings of Madison, along with Hamilton and Jay, in the Federalist Papers comprise the most comprehensive and detailed explanation of what the framers of the Constitution intended. This provides an important and

very nonpartisan frame of reference about the role the Senate is supposed to play in our system of government. By going back to our founding document and first principles, we can rise above petty partisan squabbling and start working on how to restore the Senate as the deliberative body it is supposed to be.

I will start by recapping some of the lessons from the Federalist Papers where the Senate has gone off course. Then I will talk about solutions to restore the Senate. I am introducing this solution today with cosponsorship of other Senators, which I will get to in a minute.

In Federalist No. 62, this new creation of a Senate is being explained to the people of New York to convince them to ratify the Constitution. It tells of the lessons Americans learned in the first years of independence under the Articles of Confederation, which had a unicameral legislature, as did most of the States at that time. Based on lessons learned from practical experience then of these State legislatures, James Madison lists four problems that a republic such as ours could face if it doesn't have a properly functioning Senate.

The first problem Madison recounts is a tendency for a group to form in a legislative body that pushes its own agenda as opposed to what the people elected them to do. Madison explains that having a second Chamber like a Senate makes such "schemes of usurpation or perfidy" less likely because they would have to capture both Chambers at the same time. The Senate, with longer staggered terms as the Constitution spells out, makes that even less likely.

The second lesson is that a single-chamber legislature with lots of Members tends to "yield to the impulse of sudden and violent passions and to be seduced by factious leaders into intemperate and pernicious resolutions."

If that sounds like the House of Representatives today, that is because it is supposed to work that way. The House is supposed to reflect the immediate passions of the day, even if those passions take on a partisan pen. However, when laws are made only by factious leaders, you end up with what Madison calls, "intemperate and pernicious resolutions."

So that is where he says the function of the Senate as a deliberative body comes into play.

Madison's third lesson has to do with a need for a body with longer terms that is serious about doing the hard work of legislating, instead of pushing short-term agendas, such as might be the case in a House of Representatives.

To quote Madison:

What indeed are all the repealing, explaining, and amending laws, which fill and disgrace our voluminous codes, but so many monuments of deficient wisdom; so many impeachments exhibited by each succeeding against each preceding session; so many admonitions to people, of the value of those aids which may be expected from a well constituted senate?

In other words, what Madison was saying: It is better to take the time to get it right the first time than to have to constantly go back and fix ill-conceived laws. That is what the Senate is composed to do under our Constitution, to make sure we do not get sudden changes or bad legislation out of the other body.

In the fourth and final point, Madison explains that if a legislature is constantly churning out new laws, even if they are good ideas, it causes chaos because no one knows what the law says from day to day. It changes constantly, in other words.

To this point Madison says: "A continual change even of good measures is inconsistent with every rule of prudence and every prospect of success."

Madison also points out a problem caused by overactive legislating that we tend to think is unique in modern times; that is, special interest groups that are hired as lobbyists and lawyers. To quote Madison: "Another effect of public instability is the unreasonable advantage it gives to the sagacious, the enterprising, and the moneyed few over the industrious and uniformed mass of the people."

That is a criticism we still hear today.

Just to recap, the Senate was specifically written into our Constitution to solve certain problems; namely, but repetitively, to prevent an agenda that does not reflect that of the American people, to prevent legislation based upon short-term partisan passions, and to pass fewer but better thought-out laws. Of course, starting in 2007, we had a House and a Senate controlled by the same political party and intent on enacting the President's agenda, top of which was his health care law. The deliberative process was cut short and the legislation was rammed through the Senate over the objections of Senators representing 40 percent of the States. The President's health care law is practically the poster child for what Madison called "intemperate and pernicious resolutions," reflecting a partisan agenda that did not enjoy broad support among the American people when it was passed. You know what. It enjoys less support today.

The fact that Congress didn't take the time to think through every aspect of that important health care legislation and work out a consensus that could attract broad support of the Senate has resulted in the need of a series of, as Madison said, "repealing, explaining and amending laws."

Of course, the President claimed for himself the authority to unilaterally suspend or amend parts of the law that aren't working rather than come back to Congress that under the Constitution is supposed to be the legislative body. Of course, what the President is doing now is not what the authors of the Constitution intended either. We wouldn't be in this predicament, with a deeply flawed health care law, if the Senate had been allowed to function as it was intended.

Now with neither party today having 60 votes needed to steamroll Members of the minority party, the Senate should go back to functioning as it was intended. Yet that hasn't happened. Instead we have seen an unprecedented abuse of Senate rules to block Senators from participating in the deliberative process. These abuses of Senate rules threaten to fundamentally transform the Senate from the greatest deliberative body in the world into a purely partisan rubberstamp for the agenda of the majority and its leadership. If we allow that to happen, we will see even more of the problems Madison warned about.

The Senate was intended to be a deliberative body and only functions properly when deliberation is allowed. That means we must have debate and amendments.

I hear frequent complaints from Iowans about Congress passing huge bills without Members of Congress having the opportunity to understand all the provisions, much less the people they are supposed to represent having a chance to understand the bills and to weigh in on them. It is now routine for cloture to be filed immediately upon bringing up a matter for consideration. That is not the deliberative process or how the Senate is supposed to operate.

Cloture was invented to allow the Senate to end consideration of a matter after the preponderance of Senators had concluded it had received sufficient consideration. Even that part was a compromise. Before cloture was invented, there was no way to end debate as long as at least one Senator thought a matter needed further consideration.

Cloture was introduced to balance the desire to get things done with the principle that each Senator, as a representative of his or her State, has a right to participate fully in that legislative process. The threshold was later adjusted down from two-thirds of Senators voting to three-fifths of all Senators. That is the famous 60 votes we have to have if we want to end debate. Each time this matter has been revisited, the balance has tilted more in favor of speeding up the process at the expense of allowing Senators to fully represent the people of their States.

At the beginning of the current Congress, the Senate passed changes to the Senate rules to shorten the amount of debate time after cloture is invoked for certain nominees and to expedite consideration of legislation in some situations. These changes were agreed to in exchange for a promise—a real promise—that the so-called nuclear option would not be used.

Notwithstanding that commitment, just a short 10 months later, the nuclear option was used, setting a new precedent that debate on nominations can be cut off by a simple majority of Senators, ignoring the plain text of the cloture rule that is still on the books.

At the end of the day, Members of this body agreed to extinguish certain rights in exchange for the promise not

to use the nuclear option only to have additional rights stripped away 10 months later by a simple majority vote. Taken together, those two episodes represent a dramatic shift toward domination of the Senate by one faction, contrary to Madison's stated intent.

I say all that by way of background, but that is history and the other side will have to learn to live with the ramifications of changes to the nomination process that they forced upon this body.

I would like to turn the focus now to the legislative process and what can be done to restore the Senate to the role envisioned by the authors of the Constitution before it is too late and the idea that I have and some of my colleagues have joined me in a rule change along this line.

When it comes to legislating, we have gotten off track from how the Senate was designed, but we have an opportunity to restore the Senate as a deliberative body. That was an understanding at the beginning of this Congress, that there would be some return to regular order. In exchange for rule changes that expedite the legislative process, the majority leadership would turn to the longstanding tradition of an open amendment process.

In other words, there was an understanding that the Senate would take its time to consider legislation and Senators from both sides would be free to propose amendments and have them voted on. That understanding lasted until Republicans submitted amendments that some on the other side were nervous to have to take a position on. It is no secret the majority leader has gone out of his way to keep Members of his caucus from having to take votes that may hurt them with the people back home.

The Senate rules provide that any Senator may offer an amendment to a bill being considered. Therefore, in order to shield Members from having to take tough votes, the majority leader now routinely moves to shut down all consideration of a bill before amendments are considered.

As I said at the beginning, maybe today isn't the time to give this speech because we have great comity on the bills before the Senate, but we still have a major problem.

Cloture is supposed to be used after the Senate has considered a measure for a period of time and a preponderance of the Senate think it has deliberated enough. Cloture should not be used to prevent any meaningful deliberation from taking place. The average number of cloture motions filed under each session of the Congress under this majority leadership is more than double what it was in prior sessions of Congress under majority leaders of both parties going back to 1987. This alone is an indication that cloture is being overused, even abused, by the majority.

The majority leader will tell you he is forced to file cloture because of Re-

publican filibusters. He might have a point if—and that is a big if—if it was true that after extensive debate and plenty of opportunity to consider amendments Republicans were dragging out debate purely for the sake of delay. However, we can hardly claim that the Senate's deliberation has dragged on too long when it hasn't even begun consideration of the matter in the first place.

We are now at the point where the overwhelming number of motions to cut off debate are made before debate has even started, much less than in response to a filibuster because, obviously, we have to have debate before we have a filibuster.

Let's look at a chart I have that was put together by the Congressional Research Service on cloture motions in relationship to legislative business filed the same day a matter is brought before the Senate—in other words, before debate starts—because we have to have debate before we have a filibuster.

I have color-coded each Congress based on which party controlled the Senate. You will notice that use of same-day cloture averages out to 29 times per Congress up until the 110th Congress when this majority leadership takes over. Then there is a huge jump to 98 same-day cloture motions. That is more than three times the previous average. You will notice a trend toward slightly more use of same-day clotures in the years leading up to 2007 and, of course, that makes both parties guilty.

You can see an unprecedented use of same-day clotures starting when this majority leadership took over. The trend has continued at more than double the previous average in each Congress since this majority leadership took over.

There were 65 same-day cloture motions in the 111th Congress and 67 in the 112th Congress compared to 29 the last time Republicans controlled the Senate, which coincidentally is also the previous average I have talked about.

The last line on the chart shows the total as of January, when we were only halfway through the current Congress. At that time we were already up to 30 same-day cloture motions. That is more than we saw for the entire Congress the last time Republicans were in the majority. We are back to an unprecedented use of cloture to end deliberations before deliberations have even begun, and that is clearly abusive and cannot be justified.

Some people might argue that same-day cloture motions on the motion to proceed should not be counted because the motion to proceed can't be amended. That is debatable, but I will point out that the last column shows same-day cloture filings excluding the motion to proceed, and the trend is exactly the same.

What do we do about this abuse of cloture to end consideration of a bill before it has been considered? Today I am introducing the Stop Cloture Abuse

Resolution. That appropriately spells out the acronym SCAR because cloture abuse threatens to scar the body of the Senate. The Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution will amend Senate rules to prohibit the filing of cloture until at least 24 hours after the Senate has proceeded to the matter. That means you will have debate before you file cloture. Debate could be a filibuster, but you have to have debate to have a filibuster. This reform will end, once and for all, the practice of attempting to shut down debate and amendments before the debate has started.

It is important to keep in mind that when Senators are blocked from participating in the legislative process, the people they represent are disenfranchised. By that I don't mean the citizens of the 45 States who elected Republicans. The citizens of States who elected Democratic Senators also expect their Senators to offer amendments and engage with their colleagues and different parties. Forcing a cloture vote before any deliberation prevents even Members of the majority party from offering amendments that may be important to the people they represent. Voters have a right to expect the people they elect to actually do the hard work of legislating, not just be a rubberstamp for the leadership's agenda.

Senators who go along with the tactics that disenfranchise their own constituents should have to explain to those who voted them into office why they are not willing to be full-fledged Senators. The Senate is the world's most deliberative body, and constituents rightfully expect their Senators to be able to vote. They should explain why their loyalty is to party leadership and not to the people of their State.

A Senator's job includes offering amendments. Being a Senator also means sometimes you have to take tough votes on other Senators' amendments that reveal to your constituents where you stand on various issues. It is the job of Senators, quite plainly, to deliberate and to legislate.

The Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution will make it clear that deliberation is the rule, not disenfranchisement. It would establish that a deliberative process is expected, and at least some deliberation must occur before any attempt to silence the voices of Senators and by extension the voices of the people of their respective States.

This is just one reform idea I am proposing for the Senate to consider as we work to restore the Senate as a deliberative body, and that will be introduced today. It would only address, I have to admit, part of the problem. The Senate will also have to address the abuse of filling the tree to block amendments.

The ability to block Senators from offering amendments is actually not found in the Senate rules. Filling the tree is an abuse of Senate precedents. In some ways that makes it the easier problem to address; whereas, a cloture

abuse is an abuse of the Senate cloture rule. The practice of filling the tree to block amendments can be eliminated simply by establishing a new precedent.

As everyone remembers from the nuclear option, establishing a new precedent is a simple process that only requires a majority vote. However, like the nuclear option which established a precedent that the Senate would ignore, the plain text of a rule is still on the books. Ending the ability of a majority leader to block amendments would simply involve replacing the old precedent with a new precedent.

For now, the Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution—going by the acronym SCAR—would be a good start. It would eliminate the scar on the Senate. Adopting the Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution would send a strong message that the Senate will once again deliberate over issues rather than ramming through all of them without careful consideration.

This reform will reduce the urge to force legislation through the Senate based on a short-term partisan agenda and result in fewer but better laws just as James Madison and the other Framers of the Constitution intended. Amending the Senate rules should not be a last resort, and this move should not be necessary.

We have been told the bipartisan child care and development block grant bill will be considered—and is being considered—under an open amendment process. If that happens, and if that marks the beginning of a return to regular order where all Senators are allowed to represent their States to the best of their ability once again, then perhaps this move will not be necessary.

Given the record of the past three Congresses, I don't think anybody should hold their breath on that happening.

It is a good day in the U.S. Senate that this legislation is being considered under the process the Senate was set up to perform—to deliberate, offer amendments, and debate.

If a fully open amendment process is not permitted after all, and if this rare instance of bipartisanship proves to be an exception to the rule, it will prove that the Senate is fundamentally broken and only significant reforms, such as the Stop Cloture Abuse Resolution, can restore the Senate as the world's greatest deliberative body.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

AMENDMENT NO. 2837

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to set aside the

pending amendment so I may call up my amendment numbered 2837, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the amendment. The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from South Carolina [Mr. SCOTT], for himself and Ms. LANDRIEU, proposes an amendment numbered 2837.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To clarify parental rights to use child care certificates)

On page 140, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

SEC. 10A. PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Section 658Q of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858o) is amended—

(1) by inserting before “Nothing” the following:

“(a) IN GENERAL.—”;

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(b) PARENTAL RIGHTS TO USE CHILD CARE CERTIFICATES.—Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed in a manner—

“(1) to favor or promote the use of grants and contracts for the receipt of child care services under this subchapter over the use of child care certificates; or

“(2) to disfavor or discourage the use of such certificates for the purchase of child care services, including those services provided by private or nonprofit entities, such as faith-based providers.”.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I offer amendment No. 2837 to S. 2086, the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. My amendment seeks to clarify that the statute does not favor or promote the use of grants or contracts over the use of childcare certificates, nor does it adversely impact the use of certificates in faith-based or other settings.

What we are talking about today boils down to parental choice and State flexibility—two issues the Federal Government should be thinking a lot harder about on a constant basis.

I ask my colleagues to support my bipartisan amendment to ensure low-income working parents have a choice and that States have the flexibility they need to find the childcare that best suits their child.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as if in morning business for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to talk about the Medicare Program, which of course, is a

lifeline—a guarantee for 50 million older Americans. In particular what the Senate wants to do is make sure that those older people have access to primary care doctors, nurse practitioners, specialists, and other providers in their local communities because they provide critically needed care to our seniors day in and day out.

Many of those seniors have no idea that by March 31—just a few weeks from now—Congress has to act on their behalf to preserve access to the care that seniors depend on. Suffice it to say those providers would much rather be delivering the care than waiting for this Congress to act.

Now, fortunately, there is a roadmap for getting this done—getting good care to seniors not just for a short period of time but, I say to my colleagues, once and for all. And I wish to this afternoon urge my colleagues to seize this opportunity.

Beginning my remarks, I declare I can take little credit for the opportunity before us. The path that got us here, that got us started in the effort to make the needed reforms to protect our seniors, is a direct result of the leadership of my friend and colleague Senator ORRIN HATCH. Just as Senator HATCH has done so many times over the course of an illustrious career, he was key to forging a bipartisan solution to a challenging, longstanding problem.

So what I would like to do in the beginning is to recognize that effort by Senator HATCH; my predecessor as chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator BAUCUS; House Ways and Means chairman DAVE CAMP; House Ways and Means Ranking Member SANDER LEVIN; House Energy and Commerce chairman FRED UPTON; and House Energy and Commerce Ranking Member HENRY WAXMAN. The work they have been doing over the last few months is exceptional. In effect, they have given us the opportunity to take this flawed system of setting a kind of Medicare budget known as SGR—sustainable growth rate—they have given us the opportunity to repeal and replace this flawed system with one that I think is going to make a huge difference in the days ahead by pushing up the goal of good-quality affordable care and doing it in a bipartisan way. I hope these colleagues will take it as a compliment that the SGR bill now before the Senate incorporates all of that good bipartisan work they have been doing, along with the work that was done on the Senate Finance Committee.

I see our colleague from North Carolina, who has contributed mightily to that effort, as well as, of course, the Presiding Officer of the Senate Senator BROWN, who has been such an eloquent spokesperson, particularly for those without political power and political clout. I thank both of them for their efforts.

To be specific, the legislation I introduced last night incorporates what those six Members agreed to—the six

Members I just named, the three Democrats and the three Republicans—in S. 2000. In effect, that legislation, along with the health extenders passed by the Senate Finance Committee in S. 1871, is essentially what we have the opportunity to move in the days ahead. Every single item in this bill has strong bipartisan support, and I hope we can all come together and with resounding bipartisan support get this bill passed before March 31.

There are a variety of reasons why Democrats and Republicans, in my view, can band together and repeal and replace what I have characterized as a flawed, really dysfunctional system we have today known as the SGR, but before I go through the list of reasons, I wish to make clear to my colleagues—colleagues who know me—that I am interested in sound, sensible policy and that we move in a bipartisan way—not politics, not message, but sound policy.

That is why I am here on the floor today. I have always tried to make it possible for both sides to secure their principles—principles that are important to them—and still allow us to go forward in a bipartisan and innovative fashion to get things done.

I will say to my colleagues, it is not possible any longer to just put one patch or another up and say we are going to fix the Medicare challenge. It is not going to work.

For the last 10 years Congress has always blocked these cuts. So I say it is time to stop pretending these upcoming cuts—fittingly scheduled for April Fools' Day—are any more real than the 16 times the Congress has intervened. What we ought to do, I say to my colleagues, is stop playing Medicare make believe. It is time to set aside a flawed formula that prevents the Congress from really moving ahead constructively on Medicare and to start with a clean slate.

I thought the Wall Street Journal editors really summed it up very well on February 19. In talking about the bipartisan bill I laud tonight, the editors of the Wall Street Journal said: "Simply pass the bill as is and forgo the pretense of fake-paying for it." We need to think about those words. The editors of the Wall Street Journal basically said this is all a bunch of fakery because the cuts aren't going to be made, the savings aren't going to be realized, because we have tried that route. So the Wall Street Journal said pass this good bipartisan bill.

If the Congress fails to fully repeal the flawed Medicare payment formula now, I believe there will be cuts to other providers—hospitals, home health care providers, drug companies, skilled nursing facilities. Make no mistake about it. Those providers are going to be the ones who pay for yet another patch. So a lot of this budget fakery isn't real, but the people who are going to pay for the patch are going to face very real cuts.

In total, the 16 bandaid patches have already cost \$150 billion. That is the

same cost as fully repealing and replacing the flawed SGR plus taking care of the health extenders. Those cuts, as I have indicated, have largely been paid for in the past by cuts to other providers. In the last 2 years alone, the hospitals have been forced to produce nearly \$30 billion to pay for the temporary patches.

Under the status quo, the SGR will always call for cuts that are too steep for providers to bear and Congress will step in with yet another patch paid for by still more cuts to other providers. How can we make a case for more of the same, especially when we have an opportunity to not only repeal the flawed formula but also to enact reforms that finally move Medicare away from the flawed fee-for-service approach that rewards quantity instead of quality and value?

Second, I offered the Medicare SGR Repeal and Beneficiary Access Improvement Act of 2014 in order to eliminate the ongoing threat to our seniors and the providers who serve them. Under this legislation, which reflects the bipartisan, bicameral legislation Senator HATCH and Senator BAUCUS offered last month, physicians would receive annual payment increases of .5 percent for 5 years. The following 5 years physicians would not receive automatic increases but, rather, would be eligible for payment increases based on performance. Medicare would transition to a new focus—on greater equality, value, and accountability.

This legislation would strengthen Medicare physician payments in a number of ways. It would reward the quality of care. It would improve payment accuracy. It would expand the coordination of care for patients with chronic care needs. It would encourage participation in alternative models of payment.

The bill addresses other critical Medicare and Medicaid issues. They are known as health care extenders. With these extenders, it would be possible for the Congress on a bipartisan basis to ensure that low-income seniors can have affordable Medicare premiums and guarantees that beneficiaries will have access to the therapies they need.

Under the bill, rural beneficiaries will have the security of knowing the hospitals and physicians will be there when they need them. I know rural health care, for my friend from North Carolina, my friend from Iowa, and the Senator from Ohio, is a priority. If we pass this bill, which was put together by the bipartisan group in the House and Senate, we give a big boost for rural health care and the services seniors depend on under Medicare.

Finally, something I am especially proud of because Senator GRASSLEY was good enough to work with me for a number of years on it is this would significantly expand Medicare transparency. This legislation would open Medicare's treasure trove of payment data and patients would have the information they need to make informed

choices about their care. Researchers and professionals will have the data needed to develop evidence-based methods. So this afternoon, in addition to thanking the colleagues I have already mentioned, I thank Senator GRASSLEY for all of those years working with me. Senator HARKIN knows Senator GRASSLEY has been a strong advocate for transparency in health care and other vital services, and we see his good work in this bill.

This bill is bipartisan. It doesn't cut providers or increase cost-sharing for seniors. I defer to my colleagues to decide if it is better to offset the costs of SGR repeal by reducing future war spending or unpaid for, but the bottom line is the same: We ought to act now. We should act now and put this flawed formula known as the SGR, which has produced Medicare migraines for frustrated providers and seniors alike, behind us.

Every single thing in the bill I offer today has strong bipartisan support, and it represents a compromise.

I know this isn't an easy vote for colleagues on either side of the aisle, but I submit that it sure means we will be able to accomplish what we were sent here to do—to find a way to do what is best for seniors and the doctors who care for them. With that clean slate—and I have enjoyed talking to the Presiding Officer about this because I think what this bill is all about is doing what is right for seniors, doing what is right for the doctors, setting in place a plan for the future that ensures seniors are going to get better care that in many instances will cost less. That is what I hope Senators will take home after we break tomorrow for the work period.

This is a chance to do what is best for seniors, what is best for doctors, and what is going to pay off for taxpayers in the long run.

Nobody wins with Medicare make believe. After these 16 patches, when we have the Wall Street Journal editors joining with seniors and providers and we have a bill that has strong bipartisan support, I think this is the kind of measure Senators ought to flock to.

I will close by saying we all know the public is frustrated with a fair amount of what happens in the Congress, and there is a fair level of disappointment. The Senator from North Carolina and I were talking about a variety of issues on this point this morning. But I look around this Chamber and I see Senators who have spent a significant amount of time in public life, and a number of colleagues who are on the floor, I am old enough to remember joining them in the other body before we came to the Senate, and we are here for a purpose. We are here to get things done. On this Medicare issue, which suffice it to say has been one of the most polarizing in the American public debate—in fact, I would venture to say that on the domestic side of the budget, there are few issues that have been

as divisive and polarizing as Medicare—this is an opportunity, colleagues, to check the partisanship at the door, come together, and set in place a new system of paying providers under Medicare that is going to produce better quality at lower costs. We ought to support it in a bipartisan manner.

With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BLUMENTHAL). The Senator from North Carolina.

AMENDMENT NO. 2821

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to call up Lee amendment No. 2821.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from North Carolina [Mr. BURR] for Mr. LEE, proposes an amendment numbered 2821.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To prohibit States from providing the Secretary with reports containing personally identifiable information)

On page 136, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

(e) PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.—Section 658K(a)(1) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858i(a)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(D) PROHIBITION.—Reports submitted to the Secretary under subparagraph (C) shall not contain individually identifiable information.”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2821, AS MODIFIED

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the amendment be modified with the technical correction which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the modification?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The amendment, as modified, is as follows:

On page 136, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

(e) PROTECTION OF INFORMATION.—Section 658K(a)(1) of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 9858i(a)(1)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(E) PROHIBITION.—Reports submitted to the Secretary under subparagraph (C) shall not contain individually identifiable information.”.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I believe this amendment is agreeable on both sides, and I know of no further debate on the amendment. I would ask for the question.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there further debate?

If not, the question is on agreeing to the amendment, as modified.

The amendment (No. 2821), as modified, was agreed to.

Mr. BURR. I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for up to 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss one of the most concerning issues our country faces today, an issue that Chairman HARKIN particularly has been outspoken on, and that is the growing retirement crisis.

A couple weeks ago I chaired in the Finance Committee the first congressional hearing on the MyRA retirement plan for low- and middle-income workers that President Obama proposed in his 2014 State of the Union Address. We will explore some of the issues, especially the Harkin legislation, later. But I want to talk for a moment about that hearing.

We know for many Americans, the traditional three-legged retirement system—Social Security, defined pension benefit, and personal retirement savings—that three-legged stool is simply no longer working. For many, two of those legs are gone, and the third leg—the Social Security monthly payment for low-income workers—is, frankly, way too short.

We know that Social Security remains the safeguard of retirement security for working-class families. But, as I said, it was never meant to be the only method of saving for retirement.

As we emerge from the greatest recession since the Great Depression, the private retirement system is not working.

Over the last 30 years, the defined pension benefit has, for far too many people, disappeared. The new system of tax incentives for 401(k)s and IRAs only works if you are middle income, typically, or wealthier. The top fifth—the top quintile, if you will—of households hold three-quarters of all 401(k) and IRA assets. The average worker nearing retirement—believe this—has \$12,000 in savings.

So the question our subcommittee asked was: What do we do?

One point of bipartisan agreement is that Social Security works. Witnesses from Vanguard to senior advocates agree on that point. We heard testimony from the left and from the right, from the private sector and from the Treasury Department. Everyone agreed that for low-income workers, Social Security is the most important and the most reliable way to guarantee a secure retirement. But it is not enough.

An upper income worker, once receiving Social Security, may get as much as \$2,000 or more a month in Social Security earned benefits, while a low-income worker, who is used to receiving \$9 or \$10 or \$11 an hour or less—even though working as many as 25 or 30 years—may get less than \$1,000 a month in Social Security. That is the only wealth, that is the only income, so often, those in the bottom half have.

The only question, obviously, is whether the benefit is adequate. Too often it is not.

Two-thirds of low-income families are at risk of not having enough income to maintain anything close to their standard of living in retirement. Expanding Social Security could be the difference between a modest retirement—an earned modest retirement—and living in poverty.

The hearing discussed the administration's new MyRA accounts. “MyRA” stands for “my retirement account”—a play, obviously, on the words of the IRA, the individual retirement account. It represents a small but important first step. Access to tax preferred retirement accounts must not be something workers receive when they cross the threshold into the middle class but a tool that helps them start their journey into the middle class.

There is no easy fix to retirement savings. But in a system where we primarily administer our programs to encourage private retirement accounts through the Tax Code, we need to make sure the incentives are going to the people who need them.

So what we are doing through the Tax Code, as Senator CARDIN from Maryland, who has been a long-time advocate of stronger, better retirement security for seniors—and he attended our subcommittee hearing; he is a member of the Finance Committee—are the issues we need to work on.

When President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act, he said: “This law represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built, but is by no means complete.”

The same could be said, maybe even more so, for our retirement system today. That structure is still being built. It is up to this body to ensure that it is built, that it does not collapse in the meantime, and that we can bring more retirement security to far more Americans who have worked their entire work lives.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2818

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Landrieu amendment No. 2818.

Mr. HARKIN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There is a sufficient second.

The yeas and nays are ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO) and the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN).

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 74 Leg.]

YEAS—98

Alexander	Gillibrand	Murkowski
Ayotte	Graham	Murphy
Baldwin	Grassley	Murray
Barrasso	Hagan	Nelson
Begich	Harkin	Paul
Bennet	Hatch	Portman
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Pryor
Blunt	Heitkamp	Reed
Booker	Heller	Reid
Boozman	Hirono	Risch
Boxer	Hoeben	Roberts
Brown	Inhofe	Rockefeller
Burr	Isakson	Sanders
Cantwell	Johanns	Schatz
Cardin	Johnson (WI)	Schumer
Carper	Johnson (SD)	Scott
Casey	Kaine	Sessions
Chambliss	King	Shaheen
Coats	Kirk	Shelby
Cochran	Klobuchar	Stabenow
Collins	Landrieu	Tester
Coons	Leahy	Thune
Corker	Lee	Toomey
Cornyn	Levin	Udall (CO)
Crapo	Manchin	Udall (NM)
Cruz	Markey	Vitter
Donnelly	McCain	Walsh
Durbin	McCaskill	Warner
Enzi	McConnell	Warren
Feinstein	Menendez	Whitehouse
Fischer	Merkley	Wicker
Flake	Mikulski	Wyden
Franken	Moran	

NOT VOTING—2

Coburn Rubio

The amendment (No. 2818) was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. I move to reconsider the vote.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2813

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, we have no objections to this amendment. We agree to it and urge its adoption.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the Landrieu-Grassley amendment No. 2813.

The amendment (No. 2813) was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2814

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Landrieu-Blunt amendment No. 2814.

The amendment (No. 2814) was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT NO. 2824

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is on agreeing to the Bennet-Isakson amendment No. 2824.

The amendment (No. 2824) was agreed to.

Mr. HARKIN. I move to reconsider the vote and to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF HEATHER L. MACDOUGALL TO BE A MEMBER OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REVIEW COMMISSION

NOMINATION OF FRANCE A. CORDOVA TO BE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

NOMINATION OF JAMES H. SHELTON III TO BE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

NOMINATION OF BRUCE HEYMAN TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO CANADA

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nominations en bloc, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Heather L. MacDougall, of Florida, to be a Member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission; France A. Cordova, of New Mexico, to be Director of the National Science Foundation; James H. Shelton III, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Education; and Bruce Heyman, of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Canada.

VOTE ON MACDOUGALL NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Heather L. MacDougall, of Florida, to be a Member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON CORDOVA NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of France A. Cordova, of New Mexico, to be Director of the National Science Foundation?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON SHELTON NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of James H. Shelton III, of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Education?

The nomination was confirmed.

VOTE ON HEYMAN NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the nomination of Bruce Heyman, of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Canada?

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the motions to reconsider are made and laid upon the table, the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action and the Senate will resume legislative session.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT OF 2014—Continued

AMENDMENT NO. 2837

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I understand the Scott amendment No. 2837 and the Boxer-Burr amendment No. 2809 have been cleared on both sides of the aisle; I know of no further debate on either amendment, and I urge adoption of these two amendments.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Scott amendment No. 2837 is pending.

The question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2837) was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 2809

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment 2809 is the pending amendment.

If there is no further debate, the question is on agreeing to the amendment.

The amendment (No. 2809) was agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senator from North Carolina.

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, we have had a very productive day on the child care and development block grant bill, and we have processed a number of amendments, some by voice, some with record votes. All Members have had the opportunity to come to the floor during the day and offer their amendments, and we continue to have amendments that are either filed or talked about. It is still the intent of Senator HARKIN, Senator ALEXANDER, Senator MIKULSKI, and myself that we finish this bill tomorrow afternoon. We see no reason why we can't do it with the level of cooperation all Members have shown.

Let me try to sketch out for my colleagues what our intent will be. We intend hopefully to go to a period of morning business, a length to be determined by the leaders, when we conclude our remarks. At some point in the morning, probably 10:30, we would resume consideration of amendments and we would process those amendments until shortly before lunch. It is our hope Members would take the opportunity to file those amendments tonight so that our staffs can work with them to make sure as many amendments as possible can be adopted with the support of both sides of the aisle.

We certainly can't force everybody to do so, but I implore Members on both sides of the aisle, file those amendments tonight, work with our staffs.