

brought to the United States as a child, you have gone through school and done well, and you have no serious criminal issues that worry us, we will give you a chance to earn your way into legal status and ultimately citizenship.

The DREAM Act was introduced 15 years ago. Over the last 15 years, it has passed in the House some years and in the Senate in other years. It has never become the law of the land. It was a few years ago that I wrote a letter to then-President Obama—still President Obama—and asked him, as a cosponsor of my DREAM Act, could he do something to help these young people who were fearful they were going to be deported. Republican Senator Lugar of Indiana joined me in the letter, and later some 20 other Senators joined as well.

President Obama studied it and asked his Attorney General and others to find a path, and he created an Executive action. That Executive action allows those who have been in a status such as Tereza Lee's a chance under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program, or the DACA Program, to sign up with the government, to register with the government, to pay a filing fee of almost \$500, and to go through a criminal background check. For that, if approved, they receive a 2-year temporary and renewable status. That status would allow them to stay in the United States without fear of deportation and would allow them to work.

Since the President's Executive action was launched, some 744,000 young people have taken advantage of it.

Many of their parents warned them. They said: Be careful. If you sign up with this government and tell them you are not here legally, they might use it against you.

Some of those students, young people, and their parents came to me with that concern. I said to them: As long as you are following the law, as long as you are paying the fee, submitting yourself to a criminal background check, and understand this is only a temporary situation that can be renewed, do it. Be part of America. Be part of obeying the law, following the law, and, ultimately, I think it will be to your benefit.

When I gave that advice, I could not have imagined that we would be facing a new President in just a few weeks with a totally different view on immigration. That President-elect, Donald Trump, has said some very hurtful and divisive things about immigration during the course of his campaign. Fortunately for us, it appears he is reflecting on those statements now, and some of those he is modifying, if not changing.

I hope he will do the same when it comes to this. These 744,000 DACA-eligible persons who are currently in the program, as well as others, should be given their chance in America. As long as they are no threat to our country, we should capitalize on their talents,

on the education that they have received that we paid for, and give them a chance to make America better.

I have stood on the floor many times—and I will today—to tell the story of just one of these students. It is one thing to talk about what they might bring to this country, and it is another thing to get to know them a little bit.

This is a photograph of Yuri Hernandez. Yuri was 3 years old when her family brought her to the United States from Mexico. She grew up in Coos Bay, OR. In high school she was an honor roll student and was active in her community. She was an active member of the Key Club and the Kiwanis service program for students. She was voted homecoming princess of her high school and jubilee princess of Coos Bay.

She attended the University of Portland, where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in social work. She received numerous awards and was involved in many extracurricular and volunteer activities. She was vice president of the Social Work Club, a board member of the National Association of Social Workers, and a member of Oregonians Against Trafficking Humans.

When you hear about her record in college and what she has achieved, remember this: This young lady did not qualify for one penny of Federal assistance. Because she is undocumented, because she is a DREAMer, she was ineligible for the things that many students take for granted in America, such as Pell grants and government loans.

Yuri had to find another way to do this. She had to work her way through school, borrowing money from parents. She faced hardships that many students don't face, but she overcame them. That speaks to her, her character, and her determination.

She volunteered as a tutor for at-risk elementary school students. During her senior year in college, she was a full-time student and a full-time worker to pay for her college education.

Do we need persons in America such as Yuri—so determined, so committed to their future that they are willing to make sacrifices many students don't make? Of course we do.

Yuri is now a graduate student at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. Again, she doesn't qualify for any government assistance to go to school. She is planning on a graduate degree, a master's in social work, in the fall of 2017, and she still finds time to tutor and mentor high school students.

She wants to give back to America. She wrote a letter to me about the DACA Program and said:

DACA opened a lot of doors. I no longer wake up every day fearing that I could be picked up and deported [out of the United States]. . . . DACA changed my life completely and allowed me to use my education.

Would America be better if Yuri were deported, if she were sent away from

this country to a country she has never known, one from which she was taken away when she was a child of 3 years of age?

I think the answer is obvious.

For her and for thousands such as her, this is a moment of testing. Will we in the United States of America, this Nation of diverse immigrants, this diverse Nation that believes in fairness and justice, give to those DREAMers, those DACA recipients, their chance to prove themselves? Will we hold these children responsible for decisions made by their parents or will we give them their own chance in life?

Over the last few weeks, I have been home in Illinois, and I have talked to a lot of people who have come to know these DACA recipients and DREAMers. Many of these young people are despondent. With the new President, they are afraid they are going to lose any protection they currently have from deportation. Some of them have been driven to despair. Some have decided to leave the country, and, in some rare cases, there have been cases of suicide from their despondency.

We can do better, America. We can say to these young people that, while Congress debates immigration and its future, we are going to make certain they are not penalized and hurt in the process.

For Yuri and thousands just like her, we owe it to them to give them their chance.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

ECHO BILL

Mr. WICKER. Mr. President, I come to the floor to express my support for the ECHO Act, which the Senate will be voting on in approximately 1 hour.

This represents bipartisan work—another bipartisan achievement during this very productive term of Congress. In this case it is Senators HATCH and SCHATZ who have led us to this morning's vote.

The ECHO Act is named after Project ECHO, an innovative telehealth-inspired model originally conceived at the University of New Mexico. Project ECHO has created promising opportunities for primary care clinicians to receive high-quality specialty training remotely. In this way, the most remote patient in the most underserved area can receive specialized care by his hometown doctor or provider.

I am a longtime supporter of using technology and telehealth to improve patients' access to quality care.

New Mexico is a State with many rural areas, as is my State of Mississippi. For that reason, Mississippi

and New Mexico have had to be leaders in innovative health care models for years, such as Project ECHO in New Mexico and the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson, MS.

At UMMC we are national leaders in providing technology-enabled care remotely. While ECHO emphasizes training among professionals, the University of Mississippi Medical Center has used remote technology for clinical care and patient monitoring.

Since 2003, the medical center in Jackson has reached more than one-half million rural Mississippians through the use of telehealth. To date, the program includes more than 30 specialties and can reach patients at more than 200 clinical sites.

Like Senator HATCH, I have reached across the aisle to work with our friend from Hawaii, Senator SCHATZ, to expand an innovative model for the rest of the country. Specifically, I worked this year with Senator SCHATZ on the CONNECT for Health Act, which has been endorsed by nearly 100 organizations. Like CONNECT, the ECHO Act aims at taking a proven approach to technology-enabled care and bringing it to underserved populations across the country.

The CONNECT for Health Act, which is S. 2484, would be a small but significant step toward payment parity for telehealth services under the Medicare Program. In addition to removing specific barriers to telemedicine, the bill would allow for coverage of certain remote patient monitoring services for patients with multiple chronic diseases.

Remote patient monitoring is a model the University of Mississippi Medical Center has used to expand access, improve quality, and reduce hospital admissions for some of our State's most underserved populations.

So I want to thank Senator SCHATZ for his leadership on CONNECT for Health and also ECHO, which again we will be voting on in just a few moments. I extend my utmost appreciation to Senator SCHATZ and to Senator HATCH and the Committee on Finance for including policies inspired by our CONNECT for Health Act in the bipartisan chronic care outline.

I am confident proposals to advance telehealth can improve access and cut costs, and I look forward to seeing CONNECT enacted also, but today I am pleased and thrilled we are taking an important step forward with the passage of the ECHO Act.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maryland.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. CARDIN pertaining to the submission of S. Con. Res. 56 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

ECHO BILL

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, today, the Senate is voting on S. 2873, the ECHO Act. In April, Senator SCHATZ and I introduced this bill to highlight the impressive work of technology-enabled collaborative learning and capacity-building models.

One such model that has brought promising new ideas to our Nation's healthcare delivery system is Project ECHO, which started in New Mexico and quickly expanded to Utah. Today, Project ECHO is thriving in more than 30 States.

Our bill draws on the success of Project ECHO to improve health services on a national scale. Our proposal is not political; rather, it is the culmination of a broad bipartisan effort to bring about meaningful healthcare reform that will benefit families across the country in red States and blue States alike.

Our legislation improves medical services for all Americans by providing healthcare professionals in rural and underserved communities with access to a network of peers and specialists who can teach specialty care. By connecting doctors and nurses with teams of experts, patients can receive the care they need when they need it. Most importantly, patients will not have to travel long distances to receive treatments; they can stay close to home and receive treatment from doctors they know and trust.

In today's bustling healthcare environment, policymakers often forget that healthcare delivery works differently in urban and rural settings. To bridge the urban-rural divide, the ECHO Act brings expertise to providers serving rural populations by enabling them to gain the skills they need to care for people living in their communities. Through this exchange, urban providers in return can learn how rural health is operationalized in real time. Ultimately, our proposal prioritizes rural health needs and reconciles differences in care delivery for diverse populations.

Today, I am grateful that a majority of my colleagues have agreed to support this forward-thinking, common-sense legislation. Like the 21st Century Cures bill, our proposal demonstrates our common commitment to improving health care for all patients.

Telehealth is a topic of particular interest in my home State of Utah. Under the existing Project ECHO programs, medical experts based at the University of Utah use videoconferencing to train healthcare professionals who are hundreds, sometimes even thousands, of miles away. As we work to improve telehealth, models like those in the ECHO Act will enable telementorship and provider education to occur via avenues more tailored to health professionals' needs.

This customization is an essential step to achieving person-centered health care.

As a body, we must be dedicated to improving health services for all Americans, no matter where they live. Through this bill, we are making significant progress toward achieving that goal. Using groundbreaking new technologies, the ECHO Act will enable us to take better care of our family members, neighbors, and friends. By putting communication front and center, Project ECHO will allow health professionals to share innovations and new discoveries in an efficient, timely manner.

Before turning the floor over to my esteemed colleague from Hawaii, whose collaboration on this proposal has proven invaluable, I first wish to share how our legislation came to be. Several months ago, doctors at the University of Utah—including Dr. Terry Box and Dr. Vivian Lee, as well as some of the most renowned disease experts in the country—reached out to me to demonstrate how Project ECHO was benefiting families across Utah and the Intermountain Region. Their innovative approach to telehealth piqued my interest. As it turns out, Senator SCHATZ had a very similar experience with his own constituents. After discussing our shared experiences, we joined forces to draft a bill that would allow Americans in rural counties access across the country to reap the benefits of telehealth.

The founder of Project ECHO, Dr. Sanjeev Arora, was an instrumental partner throughout this process. He worked with us to share ideas from ECHO hubs across the country, allowing us to incorporate a broad array of viewpoints. With his help, we were able to hear from countless stakeholders and medical professionals who understood the potential of our legislation. We also worked alongside the leadership of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. With the assistance of Senators ALEXANDER and MURRAY, as well as the majority and minority leaders, we were able to shepherd this legislation through the committee process and bring it to the Senate floor.

This bill was born fresh, from a bottom-up approach, which enabled us to solicit ideas and opinions from numerous healthcare professionals across the country. Thanks to their input and the support of Members on both sides of the aisle, we are poised to pass legislation that will dramatically improve the quality of our Nation's health care.

I wish to thank all those who assisted in this bipartisan effort. Today is a victory for everyone involved. I appreciate the efforts of Senator SCHATZ.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, I thank the President pro tempore, the Senator from Utah, Mr. HATCH, for his leadership on this and many other issues.