

finishing up college. I feel that I owe my life to the Center for Family Health.

Felicia knows the importance of comprehensive health coverage. It saved her life.

Nick and Chelsey know it too. They and their three young children are covered by Healthy Michigan, our State's Medicaid expansion. Nick and Chelsey are both employed full time. Chelsey also attends college full time.

During a routine visit, doctors discovered that her oldest son was born with an obstructed kidney, which had lost one-third of its function by the time he was 5 years old. Thanks to the Medicaid expansion, he was able to have surgery before his kidney lost all function. Without the Medicaid expansion, which ends under the Republican bill, these working parents and their three children couldn't afford healthcare coverage, let alone surgery.

Margo knows this because she sees it every day. She manages a clinic in Kent County on the west side of the State. She said the lives of patients are much different today than they were a few years ago. Margo wrote:

Seeing working people who have struggled all of their adult lives to manage their chronic health conditions finally have access to regular doctor visits, health education, and prescription medications has been a tremendous relief. You cannot imagine the sense of dignity our patients feel.

She added:

Please see it in your heart to care about the people of Michigan who work but do not get insurance through their employer.

So, finally, let me just say, doctors know this is a bad bill. Nurses know this is a bad bill. Hospitals know this is a bad bill. Insurance companies know this is a bad bill. I know that even many of my Republican friends know this is a bad bill. Their amendments haven't changed that. Costs go up and care goes down. Preexisting conditions come back. Millions lose their coverage.

What we should be doing is working together to stabilize the marketplace, reduce out-of-pocket costs, and lower the outrageous costs of prescription drugs—by the way, not giving a tax cut to prescription drug companies, as is in this bill, and other companies as well.

Felicia, Nick, Chelsey, and millions more like them in Michigan and across this country deserve that much.

I sincerely hope that when it comes time to vote on whether to proceed to this bill, that the majority of the Members in the Senate will say no.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

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

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

VOTE EXPLANATION

• Mrs. McCASKILL. Mr. President, I was necessarily absent for today's vote on confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 104, William Francis Hagerty IV to be Ambassador to Japan. Had I been present, I would have voted yea.●

HELP FOR WILDLIFE ACT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, a few weeks ago, I joined Senators BARRASSO, CAPITO, KLOBUCHAR, BOOZMAN, and BALDWIN in introducing S. 1514, the Hunting Heritage and Environmental Legacy Preservation—HELP—for Wildlife Act.

This bill represents a more than \$100 million annual Federal investment in the protecting the bay. The bill has several provisions, one of which reauthorizes the programs at the heart of restoring and maintaining the health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. S. 1514 reauthorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's, EPA, Chesapeake Bay Program through 2022 at \$90 million per year, which is more than the program has ever been funded in its history. This unique regional partnership, managed by EPA through the Chesapeake Bay Program office in Annapolis, helps program partners collaborate to achieve the goals of the voluntary, bipartisan Chesapeake Bay agreement. Because this program expired in 2005, reauthorizing the program is critical to secure necessary appropriations and reject the Trump administration's proposal to eliminate the program.

S. 1514 also reauthorizes the Chesapeake Bay gateways and watertrails network and the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Grants Assistance Program, which provides \$6 million per year throughout the watershed in technical and financial assistance to State, community, and nongovernmental partners to increase access to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The bill also reauthorizes the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, NFWF, until 2023. As the Nation's largest conservation grant-maker, NFWF has been instrumental in completing conservation projects in Maryland and around the Chesapeake Bay. In 2016, the State received nearly \$5 million in funding for projects protecting and restoring habitat for fish and wildlife.

S. 1514 also reauthorizes the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, NAWCA, which provides grants to increase and protect wetlands which not only provide habitat for wildlife, but also reduce the severity of flooding and coastal erosion, and improve water quality. In the 2014 to 2015 grant period alone, Maryland received \$1 million from the NAWCA program, which was

leveraged with nearly \$3 million in additional contributions by outside partners to protect 1,600 acres of wetlands in the State.

The bill reauthorizes the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act for another 5 years and authorizes \$6.5 million to be spent each year on conservation projects that protect more than 350 different species of birds which summer in the United States and winter in the tropical regions. Twenty-one different State birds are neotropical migrants, including Maryland's famous and beloved Baltimore Oriole.

S. 1514 codifies the National Fish Habitat Partnership, a collaboration between public agencies, private citizens, and nonprofits for promoting fish conservation. America is home to more than 3,000 species of fish, and 22 percent of the stream miles in this country are at high or very high risk of current habitat degradation. Over the past few years, \$175,000 in funds from this program were used in Maryland to rehabilitate three different streams, funding which was 27 matched by \$843,000 from private investors. The partnership estimates that the improved habitat in the three streams for brook trout provided a total socio/economic impact of \$9.2 million.

I am proud that S. 1514 contains so many provisions to help the Chesapeake Bay and the State of Maryland.

I would like to speak for a minute about the importance of reauthorizing these programs and the "power of the purse." As my colleagues in the Senate well know, the "power of the purse" is the two-step process of authorizing and appropriating. Authorizing legislation can establish, continue, or change programs and activities, and it signals to the appropriators that they should fund these programs. The budget process is not complete until the appropriations process provides the actual funding for the activities and programs established through the authorization process.

Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney has said that President Donald Trump is sending a deliberate message to Congress about spending money on unauthorized programs. With the President putting an emphasis on boosting defense spending without adding to the deficit, administration officials are looking closely at expired authorizations. By reauthorizing these programs, we are sending our own clear message back: these programs matter to our constituents and to us.

Mr. Mulvaney said lawmakers too often ignore the "regular order" process of approving a budget, authorizing specific programs, and then appropriating the money for those programs. "We actually spend a lot of money in the federal government on programs that aren't authorized at all," he said. "Either they used to be authorized and they lapsed, or they were never authorized in the first place. They simply were appropriated without any authorization. It's the wrong way to do it."

Because of President Trump and Director Mulvaney's position, it is more important than ever that the essential programs contained in S. 1514 be reauthorized.

None of these reauthorizations are more important to Maryland than EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program. In 1987, Congress ratified the Chesapeake Bay Program, a voluntary partnership among the watershed States and the EPA, under the Clean Water Act. The 1987 legislation supported cleanup efforts with a program of grants and scientific research. In 2000, Congress directed the EPA to "ensure that management plans are developed and implementation is begun" to meet the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. In June 2014, the Governors of the six States in the watershed signed a new voluntary Chesapeake Bay watershed agreement to work in partnership with the Federal Government through the Chesapeake Bay Program. The watershed agreement has ten goals to improve water quality in local rivers and streams and the Chesapeake Bay by 2025.

The program office is housed within the EPA, which provides staff and funding. Primary funding for the program comes from State governments. Federal funding was first authorized at \$40 million annually from fiscal year 2001 to fiscal year 2005 to fund environmental studies and grants that support restoration activities in the Chesapeake Bay. Congress has appropriated funds for the Program since the authorization for appropriations expired in fiscal year 2005. In fiscal year 2017, for instance, Congress appropriated \$73 million for the program. The President's fiscal year 2018 budget eliminates funding for the program and cuts other programs that also benefit the bay across several Federal agency partners' budgets.

A healthy bay means a healthy economy, and this recovery cannot be accomplished without a strong Federal commitment. At a time when we have seen nutrient levels dropping and water quality improving, I am deeply disappointed President Trump is intent on turning the clock back to a time when a swath of the Chesapeake Bay in mid-summer was a hypoxic low-oxygen zone or "dead zone".

The most recent State of the Bay report, issued biannually by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, evaluates the progressing and overall health of the Bay for 2014 to 2016. The Chesapeake Bay's health was given a grade of C-minus, a slight improvement from the previous State of the Bay report in 2014. This progress is due largely to the continued implementation of the Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint. This improvement, though modest, was hard-won. It is the result of countless hours of grueling work by State and Federal public servants and nonprofit workers, as well as citizens' actions across the watershed. A grade of C-minus is hardly an acceptable end-

point. To reach an A, which would represent a saved and comprehensively healthy Bay, we will need redouble and accelerate our efforts. I am determined to pass on a vibrant and healthy Chesapeake Bay to the next generation, for the sake of public health and the local economies that depend on a clean and bountiful bay. This is all the more reason that we need to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Program and make sure that it is fully funded in this year's appropriations bill.

Many Marylanders and national wildlife organizations are happy about the HELP for Wildlife Act. The Choose Clean Water Coalition and Blue Water Baltimore have issued statements of support. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation will testify in support of this bill next week in a legislative hearing the Environment and Public Works Committee is holding. The National Wildlife Federation's Collin O'Mara said the bill "represents a great bipartisan effort to conserve America's outdoor heritage for hunters, anglers, campers, hikers, and wildlife enthusiasts, while helping to restore America's wildlife populations." The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership said the bill is "the strongest legislative package of sportsmen's priorities in years."

As S. 1514 moves out of the Environment and Public Works Committee and to the Senate floor in the coming weeks, I urge my colleagues to support this bill that is critical not only to the Chesapeake Bay and the State of Maryland, but to conservation efforts in every State across the Nation.

INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, today I wish to speak about the issue of international religious freedom.

Sadly, in recent months, the nightly news has reported far too many stories of innocent people around the world who have been intentionally targeted in acts of horrible violence simply because of their desire to worship in a way their consciences dictate.

Recently, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association held the first "World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians" in Washington, where participants from 130 countries gathered together, many of whom have faced brutal persecution in their home country because of their faith.

As I am sure my colleagues and most Americans know, Rev. Billy Graham has touched the lives of millions of people in the United States and around the world. He has counseled Presidents and Prime Ministers and has been called America's pastor. As a fellow North Carolinian, I am proud call both Billy Graham and his son Franklin my friends.

As the son of a Presbyterian minister, these recent events reminded me of a letter written by my late father, David Burr, to my grandparents. On Thanksgiving Day 1964, writing from

South Korea as a soldier in the Army, my dad wrote a letter about a special worship service held for troops in a tiny chapel on the side of a hill, just within sight of the 38th Parallel dividing North and South Korea. With rifles in tow, my father and his fellow soldiers made their way through the snow and into the chapel. To their surprise, the man standing up front to conduct the worship was not their usual Protestant or Catholic chaplain, but a young Jewish rabbi and a veteran of the previous war.

In his letter, my father wrote about the beautiful lesson he had heard that day where the scripture reading was from Hosea chapter 6, which says, "The voice of God cried unto His people, What shall I do with you? For your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the dew that goes early away. For I desire goodness, not promises; I desire acknowledgement and not your bargains." My father, deeply moved by the message, then went on to write about the rabbi's powerful benediction prayer that closed the worship: "He that enjoys anything without thanksgiving is as though he robbed God."

Every July Fourth, our country gives thanks for the freedoms we are privileged to have as Americans and celebrates the birth of our Nation. Indeed, the freedoms we enjoy are immortalized in our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."

The Founding Fathers understood that these unalienable rights, including the freedom to worship, was a fundamental human right endowed by our Creator.

As I read from my father's letter, I can see he realized this, too. "All the way back to the barracks," he wrote, "I knew that I was one who was stealing from God, for every day I am enjoying the times that were so full and wonderful there at home. Every day, though we are cold and discouraged, my heart is warm with your prayers and thoughts of you, and I have not been thanking God. I have not been fair, for God has walked with me all these years and I have never thought to say thank you to Him."

I share this story today because I believe that, if we as Americans are thankful for these unalienable rights endowed by our Creator, we should also stand up for the millions across the world who are robbed of these same fundamental human rights—and sometimes lose their lives because of it. As Members of the U.S. Senate, we especially should not forget this.

As chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, I think about North Korea, I think about Iran, and I think about all the different regions around the world where terrorist activity poses a real threat to our national security. Today I also think about