

Michael has been lauded for his important contributions to the field of EMS. He has been recognized time and again by the State of New York, Ulster County, New York State EMS Council, Hudson Valley Regional EMS Councils, New York State Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue Association, and the EMS Councils of both Ulster and Dutchess Counties, among others.

Most recently, Michael received the Harriet C. Weber EMS Leadership Award from the New York State EMS Council in honor of his decades-long career serving Hudson Valley communities and advocating for fellow EMS workers. Michael is a true public servant who exemplifies the very best of our community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the House of Representatives to join me in recognizing the accomplishments of Michael Benenati. It is my privilege to rise in recognition of his extraordinary career.

HONORING BISCUITVILLE BEING  
NAMED THE NUMBER ONE FAST-  
FOOD RESTAURANT IN THE  
COUNTRY

**HON. RICHARD HUDSON**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 25, 2023*

Mr. HUDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Biscuitville on being named the number one top regional fast-food restaurant in the country according to USA Today's Readers' Choice 2023.

Biscuitville opened in 1966 in Burlington, North Carolina and has since spread nationwide, operating around 70 locations across the region. However, Biscuitville has remained true to its North Carolina roots and is a regional staple, best known for its famous fresh biscuits and biscuit sandwiches.

I have been a big fan of Biscuitville since I was a young boy in North Carolina. To this day, one of my favorite parts about going home after a long stint in Washington is being able to sit down and enjoy Biscuitville with my family, friends, or staff.

Biscuitville is a cultural icon and an esteemed member of our community in North Carolina. Its economic and community impact on our state is astounding and I look forward to continuing to work with them to see what they will accomplish in the future.

Mr. Speaker, please join me today in recognizing Biscuitville, its leaders, and employees on this momentous occasion and thanking them for all they do for our shared home of North Carolina.

RECOGNIZING SPINA BIFIDA  
AWARENESS MONTH

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 25, 2023*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, each October we recognize National Spina Bifida Month and pay tribute to the nearly 166,000 Americans living with Spina Bifida—the most common permanently disabling birth defect compatible with life—and to draw atten-

tion to the critical challenges we must address to ensure each and every American can achieve their full potential and attain the quality of life they deserve.

The federal government has an obligation to advance research into devastating diseases and disabilities to help find cures and therapies and to identify preventative strategies. Equally important is federal support for programs and initiatives that help patients and their families as they struggle to live with these conditions, such as Spina Bifida.

Literally translated as “split spine,” Spina Bifida is a condition that occurs when a baby's neural tube fails to develop or close properly. Typically occurring within the first 28 days of pregnancy while the neural tube is forming, Spina Bifida often develops before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Sponsored by the Spina Bifida Association (SBA), National Spina Bifida Awareness Month is a time to highlight the needs of the community and recognize the importance of the work done year-round to advance research, programs, and policies aimed at meeting those needs.

As co-chair of the Congressional Spina Bifida Caucus, I've had the honor to work alongside SBA to advance Spina Bifida awareness, research, and public health efforts in Congress. Founded in 1973, SBA is the Nation's only organization solely dedicated to advocating for and assisting those living with and affected by this debilitating birth defect.

Through its nearly 60 chapters in more than 125 communities, the SBA brings expectant parents together with those who have a child with Spina Bifida. This interaction helps to answer questions and concerns, but most importantly it lends much needed support, solidarity, inspiration, and hope.

Mr. Speaker, Spina Bifida is a birth defect that can happen to anyone. Every day, an average of eight babies are affected by Spina Bifida and approximately 3,000 pregnancies are affected by this birth defect each year.

We do not know the exact cause of this condition, but research has found that if a woman takes 400 mcg of folic acid every day before she becomes pregnant, she reduces her risk of having a baby with Spina Bifida or another neural tube defect by as much as 70 percent.

No two cases of Spina Bifida are ever the same and so this birth defect is commonly referred to as the “snowflake condition.” Children born with Spina Bifida typically undergo dozens of surgeries before they reach the age of 18. And during their lifetime, someone with Spina Bifida will face at least \$1 million in medical expenses, including multiple surgeries, and most can expect to spend much of their lives in a wheelchair or walking with braces.

Despite these challenges—and thanks to advances in research and medicine, along with policies supportive of children with disabilities—nearly two-thirds of Americans currently living with Spina Bifida have made it to adulthood. And while these strides are certainly worth celebrating, people with Spina Bifida—particularly adults—continue to face a crisis of care that could be largely prevented with the right resources and policies.

For instance, while we have a coordinated system of care designed to treat children with Spina Bifida in the U.S., there is no equivalent for adults. The result is that adults face a

“care cliff” and enter a very fractured medical system where they are unable to find physicians willing or even knowledgeable enough to provide treatment, as Spina Bifida is still largely taught in medical schools as a pediatric condition and education has failed to keep pace with the rapid rise in the adult Spina Bifida population.

Thousands of adults are left with few options other than to seek care in the emergency room or continue to see their pediatric care team until insurance will no longer cover their care because of their age. And to make matters worse, many of these adults rely on Medicaid as their insurance provider, so even if they have the means to travel to an adult specialist, if they are located in another state—as is often the case—their coverage is denied. Across the country, there are more than 100 pediatric clinics devoted to caring for children with Spina Bifida. There are only 20 whose focus is on adults.

At the federal level, we can and should make dramatic improvements in the ability of adults with Spina Bifida to access quality care by increasing the funding of the CDC's National Spina Bifida Program—the only federal program tasked with improving the care and outcomes for people living with Spina Bifida.

In 2008, the Federal Spina Bifida Program created a National Spina Bifida Patient Registry to collect the scientific data needed to evaluate existing medical services for Spina Bifida patients, and to provide clinicians, researchers, patients, and families, a window into what care models are effective and what treatments are not making a measurable difference.

Building on this in 2014, the Spina Bifida Program funded the development of a Spina Bifida Collaborative Care Network to identify and to disseminate best practices for the care of people with Spina Bifida at all ages.

However, with only \$7.5 million in annual funding—and this amount has been stagnant—there are only 11,000 patients in the national registry, limiting the ability of medical professionals to glean knowledge that would advance research in areas critical to improving quality of life. Even modest increases to this funding would make an enormous difference.

Additionally, we should urge NIH to work collaboratively across their many divisions to better understand Spina Bifida. As Spina Bifida can affect every organ and every system in the human body, a collaborative effort undertaken by NIH could result in research that would lead to better care for both this generation and future generations of Spina Bifida patients. Moreover, the new designation of those with disabilities as a health disparity creates a new opportunity to harness federal resources for the Spina Bifida community by ensuring their representation in NIH research and thereby recognizing those with this complex condition in a new and critical light.

We are so fortunate today that our country is benefiting from the talent and contributions of the first generation of adults living with Spina Bifida. Today, I honor and celebrate all of them, along with their care partners, and also remember those we have lost to this condition. And I urge my colleagues to not only increase funding for the National Spina Bifida Program, but to work together so that these Americans receive the care and treatment all of us want for our families and loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, with added federal support, more people living with Spina Bifida could receive assistance they need along their life's journey. I invite my colleagues to join me in this mission and join me in the Spina Bifida Caucus to broaden our efforts and advance the goal of a better future for people living with Spina Bifida.

RECOGNIZING FORMER COCONUT CREEK CITY OFFICIAL MIKKIE BELVEDERE

### HON. JARED MOSKOWITZ

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 25, 2023*

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize former Coconut Creek City Official Mikkie Belvedere for her many years of public service.

Born in Tel Aviv to German parents who fled Nazi persecution, Mikkie emigrated to the United States as a teenager. Elected to the Coconut Creek City Commission at 72, she has a long history of serving her community in Coconut Creek. Mikkie served three four-year terms, during which her fellow commissioners elected her Vice-Mayor and then Mayor of Coconut Creek.

Her public service extends far beyond city government, becoming active in various local groups, from helping establish and grow the Coconut Creek Multicultural Circle to serving as President of the Wynmoor Democratic Club. She is also an active member of her synagogue congregation. In her retirement, Mikkie remains intent on staying positive and helping her community, encouraging everyone she meets to "Keep Smiling."

Mr. Speaker, I ask that you join me in recognizing former Coconut Creek City Official Mikkie Belvedere for her outstanding service to the people of Coconut Creek in Florida's 23rd Congressional District.

SPINA BIFIDA AWARENESS MONTH

### HON. KEVIN HERN

OF OKLAHOMA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 25, 2023*

Mr. HERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize National Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Day, as well as October as National Spina Bifida Month.

Spina Bifida impacts families across these United States, my own included. My sister and niece have lived with Spina Bifida since childhood.

Spina Bifida is a birth defect which results from a hole in the spiral cord that fails to close properly, which allows nerves and fluid to form a sac outside the body. This defect means that a child must undergo dozens of surgeries before adulthood, and even then, they face a multitude of mental and physical health issues. Each condition is unique, and no two children will be affected the same way.

In a testament to the innovation and research of our American scientific ingenuity, we now have the first generation of adults who are living with Spina Bifida. However, there is still much work to do.

It is our obligation to ensure proper funding for Spina Bifida care and research so that treatment and quality of life can improve for all Americans with this condition.

COMMEMORATING OCTOBER AS  
NATIONAL SPINA BIFIDA  
AWARENESS MONTH

### HON. JERROLD NADLER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 25, 2023*

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate October as National Spina Bifida Awareness Month, to recognize the approximately 166,000 Americans living with this condition, and to draw attention to the critical challenges we must address to ensure that each and every one of these individuals can achieve their full human potential and have the quality of life they deserve.

According to the Spina Bifida Association of America, Spina Bifida is the most common permanently disabling birth defect compatible with life. Literally translated as "split spine," Spina Bifida occurs when a baby's neural tube fails to develop or close properly. Typically occurring within the first 28 days of pregnancy while the neural tube is forming, Spina Bifida often develops before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Children born with Spina Bifida typically undergo dozens of surgeries before they reach the age of 18. And during their lifetime, someone with Spina Bifida will face at least a \$1 million in medical expenses, including multiple surgeries.

Despite these challenges—and thanks to advances in research and medicine, along with policies supportive of children with this condition—nearly two-thirds of Americans currently living with Spina Bifida have made it to adulthood. And while these strides are certainly worth celebrating, people with Spina Bifida—particularly adults—continue to face a crisis of care that could be largely prevented with the right resources and policies.

While we have a coordinated system of care designed to treat children with Spina Bifida in the U.S., there is no equivalent for adults. The result is that adults face a "care cliff" and enter a very fractured medical system where they are unable to find physicians willing or even knowledgeable enough to provide treatment, as Spina Bifida is still largely taught in medical schools as a pediatric condition and education has failed to keep pace with the rapid rise in the adult Spina Bifida population. Thousands of adults are left with few options other than to seek care in the emergency room or continue to see their pediatric care team until insurance will no longer cover their care because of their age. And to make matters worse, many of these adults rely on Medicaid as their insurance provider, so even if they have the means to travel to an adult specialist, if they are located in another state—as is often the case—their coverage is denied. Across the country, there are more than 100 pediatric clinics devoted to caring for children with Spina Bifida. There are only 20 whose focus is on adults.

At the federal level, we could make dramatic improvements in the ability of adults with Spina Bifida to access quality care by increas-

ing the funding of the CDC's National Spina Bifida Program—the only federal program tasked with improving the care and outcomes for people living with Spina Bifida. In 2008, the Spina Bifida Program created a National Spina Bifida Patient Registry to collect the scientific data needed to evaluate existing medical services for Spina Bifida patients, and to provide clinicians, researchers, patients, and families, a window into what care models are effective and what treatments are not making a measurable difference. Building on this in 2014, the Spina Bifida Program funded the development of a Spina Bifida Collaborative Care Network to identify and to disseminate best practices for the care of people with Spina Bifida at all ages. However, with only \$7.5 million in annual funding, there are only 11,000 patients in the national registry, limiting the ability of medical professionals to glean knowledge that would advance research in areas critical to improving quality of life. Even modest increases to this funding would make an enormous difference.

Additionally, we should urge NIH to work collaboratively across their many divisions to better understand Spina Bifida. As Spina Bifida can affect every organ and every system in the human body, a collaborative effort undertaken by NIH could result in research that would lead to better care for both this generation and future generations of Spina Bifida patients. Moreover, the new designation of those with disabilities as a health disparity creates a new opportunity to harness federal resources for the Spina Bifida community by ensuring their representation in NIH research and thereby recognizing those with this complex condition in a new and critical light.

We are so fortunate today that our country is benefiting from the talent and contributions of the first generation of adults living with Spina Bifida. Today, I honor and celebrate all of them, along with their care partners, and also remember those we have lost to this condition. I urge my colleagues to not only increase funding for the National Spina Bifida Program, but to work together so that these Americans receive the care and treatment all of us want for our families and loved ones.

RECOGNIZING THE 10TH PASTORAL ANNIVERSARY OF PASTOR CONWAY C. JOHNSON

### HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, October 25, 2023*

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Pastor Conway C. Johnson as he celebrates his 10th Pastoral Anniversary at Sharon Baptist Church of New Brunswick, New Jersey. Pastor Johnson continues to provide outstanding spiritual leadership and fellowship to the greater New Brunswick community.

Elected as pastor of Sharon Baptist Church on June 8, 2013, Pastor Johnson brought with him a wealth of experience when he began leading the congregation on August 4, 2013. Pastor Johnson entered the ministry at 18 and began his pastoral ministry at 28. Prior to his call to serve Sharon Baptist Church, Pastor Johnson led New Hope Baptist Church of Manitou Park for 10 years.