

than 52,000 jobs, generating \$14.7 billion annually for our State's economy.

It is important that in addition to recognizing the success and strength of this industry, we also acknowledge the challenges it takes to produce the dairy products that we all know and love.

Rising costs, outdated Federal regulations, and policies that don't reflect the realities on the ground have all hurt this vital industry. That is why we must continue to fight for a modernized farm bill and for smart bipartisan policies that promote health and strengthen rural communities. In addition, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act we passed out of the House included key victories for our dairy producers.

The bill contains multiple enhancements to the Dairy Margin Coverage program such as increasing tier 1 eligibility from 5 million to 6 million pounds per farm, among other items.

One of those bipartisan policies is the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act which I proudly introduced alongside my colleague, Representative KIM SCHRIER, a pediatrician, and a bipartisan coalition in both Chambers of Congress. This bill is about returning whole and reduced fat milk to school cafeterias. It reflects updated science, addresses years of flawed Federal policy, and responds to what parents, schools, and health professionals across the country already know: Kids need access to milk that they will actually drink.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., has also voiced support for returning whole milk to school cafeterias. He recognizes its value as a nutrient-rich option that supports child development and academic success.

Milk provides 13 essential nutrients, including calcium, vitamin D, and potassium. These nutrients support bone health, immune function, and long-term well-being. However, today nearly three in four school-age children are not getting their recommended daily intake of dairy.

Since whole milk was removed from schools in 2012, we have seen declines in milk consumption, increased food waste, and growing concerns about childhood nutrition. This legislation is a commonsense solution that simply gives schools the option to serve whole and reduced fat milk once again.

I am pleased to report that the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act has already made significant bipartisan progress. It has passed the House Committee on Education and Workforce and most recently the Senate Agriculture Committee with strong support from both sides of the aisle.

With over 300 votes in the House last Congress, this bill is ready to cross the finish line.

Let me be clear. This is a win for everyone involved. It supports our children's health and gives a boost to our Nation's dairy farmers who work hard every day to provide safe, nutritious products.

Mr. Speaker, National Dairy Month is not just a moment of recognition. It is a call to action to stand with rural America, invest in the next generation, and ensure our food policies are rooted in science and not bureaucracy.

Let's finish the work we have started. Let's pass the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act. Let's deliver for our farmers, and let's keep making American agriculture stronger, healthier, and, yes, great once again.

#### CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

(Ms. PLASKETT of the Virgin Islands was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of Caribbean-American Heritage Month, a time to celebrate the profound contributions of Caribbean Americans to our Nation's fabric.

From our kitchens come flavors that have influenced American cuisine.

Our music echoes across the mainland, starting with Caribbean-American children in the late seventies in the Bronx founding what became hip-hop and rap music.

Our entrepreneurs have built businesses. Our educators have shaped minds, and our artists have colored the American cultural landscape.

Our military and revolutionary mindsets have given Americans Haitian troops during the Revolutionary War, Denmark Vesey during slavery, Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonte during the civil rights movement, and Colin Powell for his shock and awe.

We have produced judges, athletes, and public servants who carry forward the Caribbean values of hard work, family, and community.

During this Caribbean-American Heritage Month, we honor not just Caribbean Americans, but the enduring spirit of a people who transformed challenge into opportunity, who preserved culture while embracing innovation, and who continue to strengthen America's promise of diversity and inclusion.

#### RURAL HOSPITALS

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a critical healthcare crisis facing the Virgin Islands. The proposed budget cuts threaten to devastate our already fragile rural hospital system, putting thousands of lives at risk.

The Virgin Islands' remote geography makes our rural hospitals literal lifelines. When someone suffers a heart attack on St. John or faces a medical emergency on St. Croix, these facilities aren't just convenient options. They are the difference between life and death. Unlike mainland rural communities where one might drive 2 hours to reach alternative care, our residents face ocean crossings and weather-dependent transportation.

These proposed cuts would force closures of essential services. We are talk-

ing about dialysis centers, maternal health services, and trauma care that cannot simply be replaced by telemedicine or helicopter transport.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to remember that healthcare equity means ensuring that the ZIP Code, or in my case, the island I call home, doesn't determine whether you live or die. The Virgin Islands cannot afford to lose these vital healthcare anchors.

#### WOMEN VETERANS DAY

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the women veterans of the United States Virgin Islands on this Women Veterans Day. From the date that President Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act into law in 1948, Virgin Islands women have answered our Nation's call to service with unwavering dedication and courage.

These remarkable women have served in every branch of our military. I think of the great Ruby Rouss, the first Black woman to be assigned permanently to the staff of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, among so many others, past and present.

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Women veterans of the Virgin Islands and across our Nation represent the very best of our spirit. They have broken barriers, opened doors for future generations, and demonstrated that courage knows no gender.

On this Women Veterans Day, we say to every woman veteran in our Nation: Your service matters. Your sacrifice is remembered, and your continued leadership makes us all stronger.

#### HONORING DON GILLESPIE

(Mr. NORMAN of South Carolina was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. NORMAN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commemorate a special day for a very special person. On Sunday, June 1, at Westminster Presbyterian Church located in Rock Hill, South Carolina, Senior Pastor Mike Honeycutt called to the pulpit Mr. Don Gillespie.

Don has been an outstanding public servant and a devoted leader in both law enforcement and pastoral care. A man of deep conviction and humble service, Don has dedicated his life to protecting communities, building others up through coaching and ministry, and living out his faith.

Don was born and raised in Rock Hill, South Carolina, by loving Christian parents. He grew up attending First Presbyterian Church and has been a devoted member of Westminster Presbyterian Church since 1992.

From an early age, Don demonstrated a passion for sports, especially baseball and football. This passion carried him through his years at Newberry College, where he attended on a baseball scholarship and lettered all 4 years. During his sophomore year at college, Don was shared the Gospel by a close friend and accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

After graduating in 1975 with a degree in history, Don initially planned to teach and coach high school students. Instead, he embarked on a remarkable career in law enforcement when he joined the York County Sheriff's Department, becoming the agency's first narcotics officer.

Over the course of more than two decades, Don rose through the ranks to become chief deputy and played a pivotal role in establishing the narcotics division in 1979 and the special weapons tactical team in 1989, where he served as commander.

Throughout his career, Don continued to pursue professional excellence, graduating from the Southern Police Institute at the University of Louisville in 1981 and the National Academy in Quantico in 1991.

In 1997, following his retirement from law enforcement, Don became the corporate security director at Bowater Pulp and Paper Company, where he served until 2013.

Even while managing these demanding roles, Don remained a dedicated coach and mentor, volunteering as a Dixie youth baseball coach for over 24 years, and leading a high school travel baseball team for a decade. Don has consistently shown a commitment to all the people around him.

In 2014, Don was asked by his pastor to serve as director of pastoral care at Westminster Presbyterian Church. Under his leadership, the ministry has expanded significantly to include programs such as the Stephen Ministry, Grief Share, and a comprehensive pastoral care team. These initiatives, staffed by volunteers trained and equipped by Don, have provided critical support to countless individuals, both inside and beyond the Westminster congregation. His ministry reflects his heart for service and his love for others.

Don's impact on those around him has been profound. He has given a lifetime of service to his community, his church, and his family. He and his wife, Jan, who retired from the 16th Circuit Solicitor's Office, have raised five sons and are the proud grandparents of ten.

I offer my sincere gratitude to Don for his steadfast leadership and dedicated service. He is a man who truly embodies the creed: "To live is to serve." Winston Churchill once said that there will be a time when doing your best isn't good enough. You have got to do what is required.

Don has done what is required to serve his family, his community, and his God.

Mr. Speaker, the only time that I have seen anyone receive a standing ovation in church for his service, it was this man.

#### TIMOTHY O'CLAIR AND MENTAL HEALTH PARITY

(Mr. TONKO of New York was recognized to address the House for 5 minutes.)

Mr. TONKO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge all of us to demand mental health parity enforcement in honor of a young man that I once represented, Timothy O'Clair.

I first met Timothy when I served in the State Assembly in New York. Timothy played Little League and had a smile and spirit that burned incredibly bright. He played in the chess club and was an avid bowler.

Timothy enjoyed gymnastics, playing the piano, fishing, golfing, boating, and drawing. He enjoyed the outdoors and was an avid animal lover. However, Timothy suffered from significant mental health challenges, and his family struggled along with him, fighting with insurance companies to get him the care he truly needed.

The insurance companies didn't know the Timothy that I knew. Where we all saw an extraordinary little guy in a fight for his own life, the insurance company saw expenses in a ledger book. They put caps on his care and denied coverage for needed mental health treatment. When Timothy received the care he needed, he thrived. However, his family always knew that those caps and denials of coverage were right around the corner.

Things got worse for Timothy. In order to get him the Medicaid coverage he needed, Timothy's parents were forced to legally disown him. Can you imagine being forced to make that decision in your own family? Unfortunately, for Timothy, even that was not enough.

At 12 years old, Timothy completed suicide.

Timothy's memory will never leave me. His spirit inspired me and a number of other committed advocates to write and advance Timothy's Law in New York State, one of the first mental health parity laws in our country.

Specifically, Timothy's Law required parity in insurance plans between mental health and general health benefits.

Passing Timothy's Law gave me the drive to improve the way that we approach mental health care in America nationwide.

To me, that means reducing the stigma for those seeking care, addressing the growing problem of the youth behavioral health crisis, and giving our healthcare professionals the resources they truly need to adequately recognize and address the challenges those who live with mental illness must grapple with each and every day.

It also means ensuring that parity is fully enforced.

At the Federal level, the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 sought to correct the imbalance between the benefits afforded mental health and substance use disorders under group health plans and general medical and surgical benefits typically afforded under such plans.

Mr. Speaker, 15-plus years later, we still are seeing major gaps in access and affordability between mental

health and physical healthcare and the need for better enforcement of this law.

For example, studies show that insured people are nearly four times as likely to go out of network and pay higher fees for mental health care than for physical healthcare. With one in five Americans impacted by mental health disorders, we must do better.

After many years of engaging on this issue and Congress passing more laws to strengthen parity, I was excited to see the Biden-Harris administration push to update the final parity rules which will allow for greater access to mental health and substance use disorder care.

These regulations implemented an update in the law to close gaps and improve compliance with parity, which is critical for the 84.5 million Americans with these conditions.

I had hoped that these rules would finally clarify and strengthen protections, while reducing barriers to treatment for mental health. These rules would have required health plans to make changes when they are providing inadequate access to mental health and substance use care.

These rules would have made clear that plans cannot use more restrictive prior authorization, or other medical management techniques, or narrower networks to make it harder for people to access mental health and substance use disorder benefits than their medical benefits.

These rules would also have closed loopholes and required more than 200 additional health plans to comply with the parity law, providing critical protections to 120,000 consumers.

However, in response to a recent lawsuit, the Trump administration released an announcement that it no longer plans to enforce the 2024 regulations to protect individuals with mental health conditions and substance use disorders from discrimination in health insurance.

Together with 17 of my colleagues, I have written to the Trump administration urging them to reverse course on this senseless decision. We shared our strong bipartisan sentiment that this decision "marks a dangerous step in the wrong direction."

We shared that it is clear that health plans are still consistently violating the law and systematically limiting access to mental health and substance use disorder care. Rather than pausing enforcement or reconsidering the regulations, now is the time to strengthen enforcement and meaningfully provide and protect our constituents from discrimination and improve access to care.

There are so many more like Timothy out there right now suffering and in very real danger of losing access to lifesaving treatment. Instead of denying them that care, let's support enforcement of our mental health and addiction parity laws.

For Timothy and his family and friends, the battle continues to achieve this.