

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED
BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. COLLINS (for herself and Ms. BALDWIN):

S. 830. A bill to amend the Public Health Service Act to reauthorize the program relating to lifespan respite care, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce legislation with my colleague from Wisconsin, Senator BALDWIN, to reauthorize the Lifespan Respite Care Program.

Every day, an estimated 53 million family caregivers attend to loved ones across all age groups, disabilities, and chronic conditions. Respite care gives these full-time caregivers a much-needed opportunity to take a temporary break from their important responsibilities.

Caregivers help their loved ones remain at home, and the decision to assume these responsibilities full time often delays the need for nursing home care. While many of these individuals care for an older adult, almost one-third of caregivers attend to family members under the age of 50. The value of their efforts is tremendous, amounting to more than \$600 billion in uncompensated care each year.

This compassionate task, however, can take a tremendous toll. Caregivers experience higher mortality rates and are more likely to acquire acute and chronic health conditions themselves.

Respite care helps reduce mental stress and physical health problems that they may experience, thus helping to keep caregivers healthy and families intact. Yet almost 85 percent of America's caregivers have never received any respite services.

As a Senator representing the State with the oldest median age in the Nation, the well-being of our older citizens and their caregivers is among my top priorities.

Since the Lifespan Respite Care Act was enacted in 2006, 38 States and the District of Columbia have received grants to increase the availability and quality of respite services. Our legislation would extend this programming for another 5 years, through fiscal year 2030.

In Maine, there are approximately 166,000 family caregivers who provide 155 million hours of care to loved ones each year. The Maine Department of Health highlighted the importance of respite care in a report released earlier this year that evaluates the Maine State Respite Care Program. Participants shared how assistance made available through this program has enabled them to take much-needed breaks, reduce their anxiety, and even reenergize their enthusiasm for caregiving.

One Mainer shared that access to respite care has meant that she has been able to truly visit with her parents when she spends time with them in-

stead of using all of that time just to do their chores, their yard work, and other tasks. She says that it has been wonderful to have someone help her parents with their chores and shopping for their needs, and it has meant that she, herself, is far less tired.

Stories such as these emphasize the importance of respite care, of a break for these caregivers who are giving so much to their family members.

Although most caregivers are adults, there are also more than 5 million young people in our country who provide care for grandparents, parents, or siblings with disabilities. Studies have found that approximately one in five young adults who dropped out of school did so to care for a family member. These children often choose to give up activities that other teens should enjoy, such as extracurricular activities—sports, outside activities—and they may experience depression or anxiety. Our legislation would clarify that young people who are caregivers, including those who are under age 18, are also able to access respite care services.

There is a large gap between caregivers who need respite services, who need a break from the 24-hour care of their loved ones, and those who actually receive this kind of assistance. Our bill would help close that gap by reauthorizing funding for this program that has helped States establish or strengthen respite services. This funding can be used to assist caregivers in finding available respite services, to train and recruit volunteers to provide temporary caregiving, and to provide financial support through vouchers so that caregivers can better afford respite services.

Our bill is widely supported by leading caregiver and respite organizations, including the ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center, the Alzheimer's Association, and the Alzheimer's Impact Movement.

Our bipartisan legislation will provide the necessary resources to ensure that more caregivers have access to the respite services they need. I urge all of our colleagues to support this important, bipartisan legislation. It will make a real difference for the caregivers, the family caregivers, in our States.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, today, I rise to reaffirm my partnership with Senator SUSAN COLLINS in the Lifespan Respite Care Reauthorization Act of 2025.

Senator COLLINS and I recognize the challenges that family caregivers face. We have worked together over many years to advance legislation to support the essential role that caregivers play in our communities. We were successful in passing legislation that establishes a national strategy to support family caregivers, the RAISE Family Caregivers Act, and we are committed to reauthorizing the Lifespan Respite

Care Program that supports the health and well-being of family caregivers.

Every day, family caregivers in Wisconsin and across our country tend to the needs of their loved ones. Although this work can be very, very rewarding, it can also be emotionally and physically challenging.

After serving as my grandmother's primary caregiver as she got older, I know firsthand the time, the dedication, and the sacrifice involved to keep our aging, disabled, or sick loved ones safe and well. Caregiving can be a 24/7 job, and too often, family caregivers compromise their own health to ensure that their loved ones are not left in limbo.

Respite care offers family caregivers a necessary break to focus on their own mental health and well-being. That is why I was proud to reintroduce our bipartisan legislation so that our family caregivers can access the support and the relief they need. This bill would support family caregivers by reauthorizing the Lifespan Respite Care Program, which allows full-time caregivers to take a temporary break from their responsibilities caring for aging or disabled loved ones.

Across the country, there are over 53 million Americans who currently provide uncompensated care for their families, which provides an estimated \$600 billion in uncompensated care each year. Let that sink in.

By protecting the health of caregivers, respite care decreases the need for professional long-term care and allows individuals who require care to remain at home.

I look forward to continuing to work with Senator COLLINS to advance this important legislation in the 119th Congress.

By Mr. DURBIN (for himself and Mr. GRASSLEY):

S. 835. A bill to amend the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 to establish a voluntary program to reduce food loss and waste, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 835

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act of 2025".

SEC. 2. FOOD LOSS AND WASTE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM.

Subtitle A of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"SEC. 210B. FOOD LOSS AND WASTE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM.

"(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

"(1) APPARENTLY WHOLESOME FOOD.—The term 'apparently wholesome food' has the meaning given the term in subsection (b) of

the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act (42 U.S.C. 1791(b)).

“(2) **CERTIFIED PARTICIPANT.**—The term ‘certified participant’ means an eligible participant that has been certified under subsection (d).

“(3) **ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANT.**—The term ‘eligible participant’ means—

“(A) a contractor that has entered into a contract with an executive agency, the Senate, or the House of Representatives for the provision, service, or sale of food in the United States;

“(B) a State, local, municipal, or Tribal government;

“(C) a corporation, partnership, organization, or association;

“(D) a farm or a food producer, manufacturer, processor, holder, or packer;

“(E) a retail grocer;

“(F) a restaurant or similar food service establishment;

“(G) an institution of higher education or a consortium of those institutions; or

“(H) a primary or secondary school or a consortium of those institutions.

“(4) **EXCESS.**—The term ‘excess’, with respect to food, means that the food would otherwise be discarded.

“(5) **FOOD.**—The term ‘food’ means food (as defined in section 201 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321)) that is intended for human consumption.

“(6) **PROGRAM.**—The term ‘program’ means the Food Loss and Waste Reduction Certification Program established under subsection (b).

“(7) **SECRETARY.**—The term ‘Secretary’ means the Secretary of Agriculture.

“(b) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary shall establish a voluntary program, to be known as the ‘Food Loss and Waste Reduction Certification Program’—

“(1) to certify eligible participants in accordance with subsection (d); and

“(2) to promote certified participants in accordance with subsection (e).

“(c) **PURPOSES.**—The purposes of the program are—

“(1) to reduce food loss and waste;

“(2) to increase donations of excess, apparently wholesome food to nonprofit organizations that provide food assistance to individuals in need; and

“(3) to increase the use of alternative disposal methods for food, such as redirection to animal feed, anaerobic digestion, and composting.

“(d) **CERTIFICATION.**—

“(1) **CRITERIA.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—

“(i) **ESTABLISHMENT AND PUBLICATION.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of the Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act of 2025, the Secretary shall establish and publish in the Federal Register criteria for the certification of an eligible participant under the program.

“(ii) **INCLUSIONS.**—Criteria described in clause (i) shall include the submission to a third-party certifier accredited under paragraph (3) of documentation from 12 consecutive months on the quantity of food that the eligible participant—

“(I) has donated to nonprofit organizations that provide food assistance for individuals in need; or

“(II) has sent to be disposed of.

“(B) **STAKEHOLDER INPUT.**—The Secretary shall solicit comments from interested parties prior to the establishment or revision of the criteria described in subparagraph (A).

“(C) **REVISIONS.**—

“(i) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall revise the criteria described in subparagraph (A) on a periodic basis.

“(ii) **PUBLICATION.**—The Secretary shall publish in the Federal Register criteria re-

vised under clause (i) not later than 270 days before the effective date of the revised criteria, including an explanation of the revisions.

“(2) **ACCREDITATION BODIES.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of the Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act of 2025, the Secretary shall establish a process to recognize accreditation bodies to accredit third-party certifiers under paragraph (3)(A).

“(B) **STANDARDS.**—The Secretary shall recognize an accreditation body under subparagraph (A) if the accreditation body meets such standards as the Secretary shall establish.

“(3) **THIRD-PARTY CERTIFIERS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than 18 months after the date of enactment of the Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act of 2025, the Secretary shall establish a process for accreditation bodies recognized under paragraph (2) to accredit third-party certifiers to review and certify eligible participants under the program.

“(B) **STANDARDS.**—An accreditation body recognized under paragraph (2) shall accredit a third-party certifier under subparagraph (A) if the third-party certifier meets such standards as the Secretary shall establish.

“(C) **PREFERENCE.**—In accrediting third-party certifiers under subparagraph (A), an accreditation body recognized under paragraph (2) shall give preference to institutions of higher education that have expertise in food loss and waste reduction.

“(D) **CERTIFICATION.**—A third-party certifier accredited under subparagraph (A) shall review and certify an eligible participant under the program if the eligible participant meets the criteria established under paragraph (1).

“(4) **PUBLICATION.**—The Secretary shall maintain on a publicly available website of the Department of Agriculture—

“(A) a list of accreditation bodies recognized under paragraph (2); and

“(B) a list of third-party certifiers accredited under paragraph (3).

“(e) **PROMOTION.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary shall promote a certified participant under the program, including through—

“(A) voluntary labeling established under paragraph (2); and

“(B) such other communications as the Secretary determines to be appropriate relating to the products, buildings, practices, and policies of the certified participant, such as—

“(i) publication on the website of the Department of Agriculture of information relating to the certified participant; and

“(ii) holding events to promote the certified participant or otherwise relating to the program.

“(2) **VOLUNTARY LABELING.**—The Secretary shall establish 1 or more voluntary labels that indicate that a certified participant is certified under the program.

“(f) **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.**—The Secretary shall carry out this section in coordination with the Commissioner of Food and Drugs and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding revised under section 3 of the Reduce Food Loss and Waste Act of 2025.

“(g) **AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, including for the hiring of additional personnel, \$3,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2030, to remain available until expended.”

SEC. 3. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING.

The Secretary of Agriculture, the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, and the Adminis-

trator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall revise, in accordance with section 210B of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (as added by section 2), the agreement signed on December 17, 2020, relating to cooperation and coordination on food loss and waste.

By Mrs. BRITT (for herself, Mr. KAINE, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. KING, and Mrs. GILLIBRAND):

S. 846. A bill to implement or strengthen programs that increase the supply of quality child care services by enhancing the wages of child care workers, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

By Mrs. BRITT (for herself, Mr. KAINE, Ms. ERNST, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. CURTIS, Mr. KING, Ms. COLLINS, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, and Mrs. CAPITO):

S. 847. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to expand the employer-provided child care credit and the dependent care assistance exclusion; to the Committee on Finance.

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President on November 5, President Donald J. Trump was elected to a second term on the back of a big-tent coalition. In 2024, this election showed us that we needed to put the finishing touches on a shift that we have seen occurring in our party and our Nation.

The Republican Party is the party of parents, we are the party of families, and we are the party of hard-working Americans. We have an opportunity to prove it, starting with addressing our country's childcare crisis.

Anyone who has kids can attest to this: It is incredibly difficult to find affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare.

When I was a student in Tuscaloosa—I had gone back to school with essentially a newborn and an 11-month-old; decided, why not? Law school sounds good. I joked that on the scale of bad ideas I have had in my life—and I have had a few—that one is without a doubt No. 1.

In the midst of trying to figure out my 1L year, I also had to figure out childcare, and it was challenging for me to find a place where I could get both of my kids in. So at the very beginning, there I was, taking one child to one place and one child to another, all hoping to show up at torts on time and then get back before you get fined, picking them both up and hoping traffic didn't keep me from being late.

When my husband and I had the opportunity to move to Birmingham, where he began his new career and I had 1 more year of law school left, we got them immediately—both of our kids—into one childcare facility. But the check that we wrote—wow—it felt like I was writing a check for college tuition and not a check for a 3- and 4-year-old to be cared for and loved and educated during the day.

Well, I will tell you what. The problem—that was, what, 13 years ago—has

only gotten worse. Childcare costs have been increasing. They have actually increased 36 percent over the last 10 years, actually outpacing inflation. It has gotten to the point where parents, on average, are spending 22 percent of their income on childcare. The median annual price of childcare in this country is about \$15,600. The cost is crushing for so many parents. It is also prohibitive.

Ask yourself this: How many married couples, do you think, think about having another child; they want to, and they start looking at the dollars and cents and feel like they can't financially afford it?

To my fellow Republicans: Don't we want to incentivize rather than deter parents from starting their families? And how can we, as the party of life and the party of families and the party of parents and the party of workers, neglect to make that easier? If our goal is creating a comprehensive culture of life—and that should absolutely be our goal—then we have a role to play in the childcare space.

But families are not the only ones that are affected by the current state of childcare in this country. The amount of money that the American economy loses annually because of childcare, the challenges that we face as a result of the affordability and accessibility, are staggering. Our economy loses \$122 billion a year, and 74 percent of mothers and 66 percent of fathers either have to leave work early, arrive late, or be absent because of last-minute changes in childcare. Also, 59 percent of part-time or nonworking parents say they would go back to work—they want to go back to work—but, unfortunately, they don't have access to quality childcare at a reasonable cost. That isn't good for the broader economy, and it isn't good for American workers.

President Trump has made it clear he wants America to be a place that builds things once again. He wants to unleash a golden era for made-in-America excellence, where the skill, hard work, and ingenuity of our people accomplish the impossible and changes the world. To accomplish that goal, which I wholeheartedly agree with, we need to tackle the childcare affordability crisis.

Ultimately, this is a workforce crisis as well. That is where the two-pronged approach that I have introduced today, alongside a number of my colleagues, comes into play. With the Child Care Workforce Act and the Child Care Availability and Affordability Act, it consists of targeted investments in families and small businesses. It modernizes our existing tax credits so that our policy reflects our current economic reality. It is a good example of commonsense policymaking.

We are not creating or growing another entitlement. We are letting Americans keep more of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars in a manner that grows our economy and gives peo-

ple an opportunity for their American dream. And we are offering job creators an incentive to invest directly into hard-working people with childcare-related benefits.

We will help couples who want to have more children. We will help parents be able to reenter the workforce after having kids. And we will help our job creators—especially small businesses—recruit and retain workers.

This legislation is pro-family. It is pro-Main Street. It is pro-growth.

For the first time in years, the Republican Party controls both Chambers of Congress and the White House. We have an opportunity we can't afford to waste. If we truly are the party of parents and families and hard-working Americans, we have an opportunity to prove it. Let's address the childcare crisis in this year's tax package. I think America will be better for it.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 105—CONDEMNING THE MASS TERMINATIONS OF EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS CARRIED OUT WITH NO JUSTIFICATION OR ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT ON VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. HICKENLOOPER, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. SLOTKIN, Mr. LUJÁN, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. WARNOCK, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. KAINE, Ms. ROSEN, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. ALSOBROOKS, Mr. KELLY, Ms. WARREN, Ms. HASSAN, Mr. SCHIFF, Ms. BALDWIN, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. GALLEGO, Mr. PETERS, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. SCHATZ, Mr. WARNER, Ms. SMITH, Mr. PADILLA, and Mr. HEINRICH) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs:

S. RES. 105

Whereas veterans make up approximately 30 percent of the Federal workforce, including nearly 26 percent of the workforce of the Department of Veterans Affairs and 45 percent of the workforce of the Department of Defense;

Whereas more than 642,000 veterans are continuing their public service through careers in the Federal Government;

Whereas veterans bring invaluable experience, including technical expertise, training, security clearances, and commitment to service, to their work as Federal employees;

Whereas, on February 13, 2025, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Doug Collins, announced the termination of 1,000 employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas, on February 24, 2025, Secretary Collins terminated an additional 1,400 employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs;

Whereas United States Senators have, in pursuit of their oversight duties, attempted to obtain detailed information from the Department of Veterans Affairs regarding these terminations, including any analysis of the impacts on veterans, confirmation that the

terminations did not affect essential services like call centers, homeless programs, mental health care, transition assistance, claims processing, tribal health, and veterans education benefits, involvement of unelected, unauthorized, non-Department of Veterans Affairs personnel in the decisionmaking process, and how much the Department of Veterans Affairs spent recruiting and hiring these employees and will now spend covering their workloads, but have yet to receive that information;

Whereas the mass terminations of employees of the Federal Government are damaging the economic security and morale of veterans and their families;

Whereas these terminations are harming the trust of veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and harming the ability of the Department to recruit and retain employees;

Whereas gainful employment and economic security is a chief social determinant of health; and

Whereas veterans and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs have expressed concerns regarding the effect of these terminations, including—

(1) the suspension of service lines, beds, and operating rooms at hospitals and clinics of the Department;

(2) the cancellation or postponement of mammogram and other time-sensitive appointments;

(3) the reduction of support lines for caregivers;

(4) the termination of Veterans Crisis Line employees;

(5) the termination of employees performing critical research at the Department;

(6) the termination of cyber security personnel protecting websites of the Department; and

(7) the termination of Vet Center staff.

Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That is the sense of the Senate that—

(1) mass terminations of employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs carried out with no justification or analysis of the impact on veterans and their families should be condemned; and

(2) all affected employees should be reinstated.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, I have three requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to Rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet in open session during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 9:30 a.m., to consider a nomination.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

The Committee on Veterans Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Tuesday, March