Coweta County, Georgia, for being named the 2026 National Schools to Watch Teacher of the Year.

Selected as the sole recipient of this honor, Dr. Dawson was chosen from an exceptionally competitive field of educators representing more than 750 Schools to Watch schools across 22 States.

For more than 14 years, Dr. Dawson has served students in Georgia's public schools. Before being named assistant principal of Blake Bass Middle School in Newnan, Dr. Dawson taught social studies and audio/video broadcast and film.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday, I met with Dr. Dawson at the Capitol. Her passion for education is inspiring, and her ideas about new educational opportunities will provide incredible experiences for the students at Blake Bass Middle School.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Dawson sponsors Beta Club, leads the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Chick-fil-A Leader Academy, and serves as the school's yearbook adviser.

Mr. Speaker, all of us remember a teacher who shaped our lives and guided us onto a path toward success.

Dr. Ashley Dawson, the 2026 National Schools to Watch Teacher of the Year, is that type of teacher for which Coweta County and all of Georgia's Third Congressional District are very proud.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess subject to the call of the Chair.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 8 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1430

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. FONG) at 2 o'clock and 30 minutes p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or votes objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

The House will resume proceedings on postponed questions at a later time.

RECOVER COVID UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD IN BANKS ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8873) to recover unclaimed pandemic-era unemployment compensation funds held by financial institutions or escheated to State unclaimed property administrators, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8873

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 ''Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act''.

SEC. 2. NATIONAL RECOVERY COORDINATOR AND TASK FORCE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—

(1) DESIGNATION OF NATIONAL RECOVERY COORDINATOR.—The Secretary of Labor, in consultation with the Secretary of the Treasury, the Inspector General of the Department of Labor, and the Attorney General, shall designate an official to serve as National Recovery Coordinator to oversee and coordinate the activities and responsibilities of the task force described in paragraph (2).

(2) TASK FORCE ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the National Recovery Coordinator shall convene a task force to be named the ''Recover Pandemic Unemployment Funds in Banks Task Force'' (in this section, the ''Task Force'').

(3) MEMBERS.—The Task Force shall include—

(A) the Attorney General, or their designee;

(B) the Secretary of Labor, or their designee;

(C) the Inspector General of the Department of Labor, or their designee;

(D) the Secretary of the Treasury, or their designee;

(E) the Chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, or their designee; and

(F) the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or their designee.

(b) TASK FORCE RESPONSIBILITIES.—It shall be the responsibility of the Task Force to—

(1) coordinate with applicable State agencies to identify Federal pandemic unemployment compensation payments issued on prepaid debit cards that—

(A) are held by financial institutions, and other entities identified by the Inspector General of the Department of Labor, contracted by a State agency to transfer such payments to unemployment claimants; or

(B) were transferred by such an entity to, and are currently held by, a State agency responsible for unclaimed property;

(2) coordinate with appropriate Federal agencies to develop model processes which comply with relevant Federal and State laws and result in cost-effective recovery of the payments identified under paragraph (1), including issuing guidance, in coordination with the Secretary of Labor, to administrators of State agencies responsible for administering Federal unemployment compensation payments or determining fraud in such programs, including—

(A) guidelines for—

(i) reviewing such payments and determining if such a payment was an improper payment;

(ii) determining whether cost-effective recovery of an improper payment is possible, including a threshold, or a methodology for calculating a dollar threshold, for cost-effective recovery; and

(iii) actions, consistent with State law, to be taken by the State agency if an improper payment is determined to be the result of fraud;

(B) assurances that, subject to section 303(g) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 503(g)), any action taken in relation to a determination that a payment identified under paragraph (1) is an improper payment shall be taken under State law;

(C) a model notice and information, developed in coordination with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, about resources available to individuals whose identity information is determined to have been fraudulently used to obtain Federal pandemic unemployment compensation;

(D) information on the legal pathways described under paragraphs (3) and (4) for recovery of payments that are improper payments held by financial institutions and agencies described in paragraph (1); and

(E) procedural requirements for State agencies to follow when funds are returned by such institutions that provides a standardized methodology to return funds to the Federal Government;

(3) issue guidance, in coordination with the Comptroller of the Currency and Chairman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, to financial institutions described in paragraph (1) that are holding payments that are improper payments that provides information on a legal pathway, consistent with banking regulations and applicable contracts with State agencies, for returning such payments to the appropriate State agency; and

(4) issue guidance, in coordination with the Secretary of Treasury, to administrators of State agencies responsible for unclaimed property on the obligations of such agencies to review and return payments described in paragraph (1)(B) to the appropriate State agency.

(c) CONSULTATION REQUIREMENT.—In developing the guidance required to be issued under paragraphs (2), (3), and (4) of subsection (b), the Task Force shall consult with State agencies and incorporate best practices from previous attempts by any such States to recover payments determined to be improper payments from institutions described in paragraph (1)(A) of such subsection.

(d) STATE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The Secretary of Labor shall reimburse States for all administrative costs incurred as a result of coordination with the Task Force by reason of an agreement under section 2102, 2104, or 2107 of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9201; 9203; 9205).

(e) DEFINITIONS.—Except as otherwise specified, in this section:

(1) FEDERAL PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.—The term ''Federal pandemic unemployment compensation'' means a payment of—

(A) pandemic unemployment assistance under section 2102(b) of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9021(b));

(B) Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation and Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation under section 2104(b)(1) of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9023(b)(1)); and

(C) pandemic emergency unemployment compensation under section 2107(a)(2) of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9025(a)(2)).

(2) IMPROPER PAYMENT.—The term ''improper payment'' means any amount of a pandemic unemployment payment to which the individual is not entitled.

(3) STATE; STATE AGENCY; STATE LAW.—The terms ''State'', ''State agency'', and ''State law'' have the meanings given those terms in section 205 of the Federal-State Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1970 (26 U.S.C. 3304 note).

SEC. 3. EXTENSION OF THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD BY INDIVIDUALS UNDER CERTAIN UNEMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS.

(a) PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE.—Section 2102 of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9021) is amended—

(1) by redesignating subsection (h) as subsection (i); and

(2) by inserting after subsection (g) the following new subsection:

''(h) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—

''(1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law and subject to paragraph (2), any criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action for a violation of, or conspiracy to violate, section 371, 641, 1028A, 1029, 1341, 1343, 1344, 1349, 1956, or 1957 of title 18, United States Code, or section 3729 or 3802 of title 31, United

States Code, with respect to any unemployment compensation claim funded in whole or in part by pandemic unemployment assistance under this section shall be brought not later than 10 years after the date of the violation or conspiracy.

''(2) EXCEPTION.—Paragraph (1) shall not apply with respect to a criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action if the statute of limitations applicable to such criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action expired prior to the date of enactment of the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act.''.

(b) FEDERAL PANDEMIC UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION AND MIXED EARNER UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.—Section 2104(f) of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9023(f)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(5) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law and subject to subparagraph (B), any criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action for a violation of, or conspiracy to violate, section 371, 641, 1028A, 1029, 1341, 1343, 1344, 1349, 1956, or 1957 of title 18, United States Code, or section 3729 or 3802 of title 31, United States Code, with respect to any unemployment compensation claim funded in whole or in part by Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation or Mixed Earner Unemployment Compensation under this section shall be brought not later than 10 years after the date of the violation or conspiracy.

''(B) EXCEPTION.—Subparagraph (A) shall not apply with respect to a criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action if the statute of limitations applicable to such criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action expired prior to the date of enactment of the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act.''.

(c) PANDEMIC EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION.—Section 2107(e) of the CARES Act (15 U.S.C. 9025(e)) is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

''(5) STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.—

''(A) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law and subject to subparagraph (B), any criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action for a violation of, or conspiracy to violate, section 371, 641, 1028A, 1029, 1341, 1343, 1344, 1349, 1956, or 1957 of title 18, United States Code, or section 3729 or 3802 of title 31, United States Code, with respect to any unemployment compensation claim funded in whole or in part by Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation under this section shall be brought not later than 10 years after the date of the violation or conspiracy.

''(B) EXCEPTION.—Subparagraph (A) shall not apply with respect to a criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action if the statute of limitations applicable to such criminal prosecution or civil enforcement action expired prior to the date of enactment of the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act.''.

(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by section Act shall take effect on the date of enactment of this Act.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. SUOZZI) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and submit extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act led by my Ways and Means colleagues Representative BETH VAN DUYNE and Representative TOM SUOZZI.

As the lead sponsor of this legislation, Representative VAN DUYNE has been shining a spotlight on the fraud epidemic, even from her earliest days serving on the Ways and Means Committee.

Unemployment insurance benefits are a target-rich environment for fraudsters.

According to the Government Accountability Office, between $100 billion to $135 billion in COVID-era unemployment benefits are estimated to have been taken by fraudsters using eligibility loopholes and stolen identities.

Of that money, a Department of Labor Inspector General investigation found that nearly $1 billion of fraudulent COVID-era unemployment benefits is currently frozen and being held in financial institutions across the country. At one financial institution, the highest balance on a single card is $76,000. At a second financial institution, it is $56,000.

The statute of limitations for prosecuting COVID-era unemployment insurance fraud has already begun to expire, limiting the amount of money law enforcement can return or the number of criminals that they can bring to justice. Time is of the essence to recover the money stolen and rightfully owed to taxpayers.

This bipartisan bill establishes a new Federal task force to work with States to return the fraudulent unemployment benefits sitting in banks to American taxpayers.

The task force will develop model processes and guidance necessary for States to reclaim funds in a cost-efficient way, issue guidance to financial institutions on the legal path for returning funds, and establish due process protections for claimants whose identity was stolen as part of the crime.

Additionally, the bill doubles the statute of limitations for COVID-era unemployment insurance fraud prosecution from 5 to 10 years. As of last year, the Department of Labor reported more than 150,000 open complaints, and the Department of Justice had more than 1,648 open investigations regarding pandemic unemployment fraud. Prosecutors need more time to hold criminals accountable.

Every day Congress waits to pass this bill is another day that another fraudster will get away with stealing money that rightfully belongs to taxpayers and individuals in need.

The Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act passed 41–0 out of the Ways and Means Committee. This bill has also received the endorsement from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the Taxpayers Protection Alliance, and the Strategic Services on Unemployment and Workers' Compensation.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to provide a similar level of support and advance this to the Senate and President Trump's desk.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 8873, the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act.

I thank Chairman SMITH, and I want to especially thank my colleague Representative VAN DUYNE for sponsoring this bipartisan, commonsense bill that will help root out fraud, protect vulnerable Americans, and help return stolen funds to the States who were robbed.

We have to remember that COVID was a really terrifying period for our country. Everyone was vulnerable, and hardworking Americans lost their jobs, homes, and loved ones overnight.

Many struggling families were forced to rely on unemployment assistance to make ends meet. Twenty-two million workers lost their jobs, and about a quarter of all U.S. workers received unemployment benefits.

As a result, States issued billions in unemployment benefits, some of it on prepaid debit cards through contracts with banks. These benefits were meant to help families afford their basic needs during the lockdown. These benefits kept more than 5 million people out of poverty as they faced the threat of mortgage defaults, utility shutoffs, and hunger.

Unfortunately, while people were isolated and overwhelmed and desperate for reliable information, criminals and fraudsters exploited those vulnerabilities and attacked unsuspecting Americans. In fact, domestic and international cybercrime rings weaponized stolen identities. That is, they stole people's identities. They used loopholes to actually apply for unemployment insurance using the fake identities that they had stolen, and they applied for this Federal pandemic aid.

Right now, as I speak to you, some of the stolen money is still sitting untouched in debit cards. Even worse, investigators estimate that the majority of fraudulent debit cards are as a result of identity theft, and many of the victims have no idea that they were even targeted. These are working families and senior citizens.

Cybercriminals have figured out how to take complete advantage of our system. Most importantly, they wait to withdraw the funds from these debit cards until the statute of limitations expires on each case and, therefore, avoid the legal consequences for stealing.

According to the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, FinCEN, in 2021, banks experienced $212 billion in suspicious activity related to identity. That number increased to $394 billion in transactions in 2023.

The statute of limitations for prosecuting many of these pandemic crimes is 5 years, meaning that consequences began expiring for some of these criminals in March of 2025. This has already resulted in the loss of hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer funds. We have to act now, before we lose these millions of dollars.

Congress has to be united in going after fraud and protecting Americans from illegal scams and identity theft. We have an opportunity to take that action today by supporting H.R. 8873, Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act.

This bill would extend the statute of limitations for the remaining cases, where it hasn't already expired, and create a task force to support recovery of those funds identified by the inspector general that can be recovered cost-effectively, without diverting time or money from future fraud protection.

Every time a debit card that was issued using a stolen identity is detected, in addition to recovering the money, this bill ensures that the victim of the theft is notified and provided with resources.

This is critically important because, if the criminal has used the victim's identity to apply for pandemic unemployment insurance, chances are that that criminal is going to use that stolen identity to commit other crimes as well.

By extending the statute of limitations, this bill would allow the Office of the Inspector General to complete at least 300 current investigations into large-scale unemployment insurance fraud and potentially recover those funds for the taxpayer.

By supporting this bill, Congress can help States focus their energy on the most cost-effective prevention and recovery efforts. Money recovered by the States will help ensure that State unemployment insurance systems are able to prevent fraud and pay earned benefits on time and accurately to unemployed Americans in the future.

□ 1440

This is especially important right now. Gas prices are too high. Grocery prices are too high. Healthcare prices are too high, and too many Americans live in fear of losing their jobs and being unable to afford their families' basic needs.

We have a responsibility to eradicate fraud, hold fraudsters accountable, and keep Americans and their identities safe from harm online.

Mr. Speaker, I once again thank Representative VAN DUYNE for sponsoring this commonsense bill, and I urge all Members to support this legislation. I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she may consume to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. VAN DUYNE).

Ms. VAN DUYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 8873, the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act, which I was proud to introduce with the gentleman from New York (Mr. SUOZZI), my bipartisan partner.

This commonsense legislation creates a Federal task force to work with States to recover unspent Federal pandemic unemployment funds that remain frozen in financial institutions and return those taxpayer dollars to the U.S. Treasury, but Congress must act quickly.

Last December, the Department of Labor's Office of Inspector General issued two fraud alerts identifying nearly $1 billion in unspent Federal unemployment funds frozen by banks because of suspected fraud. Those funds are now sitting on millions of prepaid debit cards that States used to distribute supplemental unemployment benefits during the pandemic.

More than 6 years later, many of these accounts have simply been forgotten. They remain unreconciled by State workforce agencies and, in many cases, have even been transferred to State unclaimed property divisions, making recovery even that much more difficult. Without congressional action, hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars could be lost permanently.

The Committee on Ways and Means has made combating pandemic unemployment fraud a top priority. Earlier this year, the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare held a hearing that examined the scope of this problem and the consequences of failing to act.

During that hearing, the Department of Labor Inspector General testified that the fraud alerts covered prepaid debit card accounts across 21 States and that more than $200 million in suspected fraudulent funds have already been transferred into State unclaimed property programs.

H.R. 8873 addresses this problem by establishing a Federal task force, led by a national recovery coordinator, to partner with States in identifying, recovering, and returning those Federal unemployment dollars to taxpayers.

The bill also extends the statute of limitations for prosecuting pandemic unemployment fraud from 5 years to 10 years. This provision mirrors H.R. 1156, the Pandemic Unemployment Fraud Enforcement Act, which passed the House last year with bipartisan support.

Federal investigators are still actively pursuing hundreds of pandemic fraud cases. Since October 2025 alone, the Department of Labor Inspector General has brought 59 criminal matters to prosecution, resulting in charges against 131 individuals and more than $16 million in recoveries. Extending the statute of limitations ensures prosecutors have the time they need to hold fraudsters accountable.

This legislation has earned bipartisan support from the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the Taxpayers Protection Alliance, and Strategic Services on Unemployment & Workers' Compensation.

Every dollar stolen through fraud is a dollar that cannot serve hardworking Americans or reduce our Nation's debt. It is not too late to recover these taxpayer funds, and it is not too late to hold criminals accountable. H.R. 8873 gives us the tools to do both.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation.

Mr. SUOZZI. Mr. Speaker, I have no further speakers, and I am prepared to close.

Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

H.R. 8873, the Recover COVID Unemployment Fraud in Banks Act, is a commonsense bill that helps eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse; recovers stolen taxpayer dollars; and protects some of our most vulnerable citizens, including older Americans.

At a time when too many families face the uncertainty of unemployment, high gas and grocery prices, and seniors are forced to choose between food, rent, and healthcare, we can't allow fraudsters to get away with stealing funds meant to help hardworking families.

We have a responsibility to root out fraud, hold bad actors accountable, and protect Americans and their identities from being exploited ever again.

I again thank the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. VAN DUYNE), my colleague, for working in a bipartisan and collaborative fashion on this commonsense legislation. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan bill.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I am glad the Committee on Ways and Means was able to come together in bipartisan unity and bring this important piece of legislation to the floor.

The American people expect Congress to root out the fraud in the critical social safety net so many rely on, including unemployment insurance.

To date, only $6 billion of stolen UI benefits have been recovered.

It is shameful that these benefits were stolen from vulnerable Americans in the first place. It will be equally shameful if Congress doesn't pass the bipartisan bill, recover the fraudulent unemployment benefits we know are sitting in banks, and prosecute more fraudsters.

I thank all of my colleagues, but especially the leaders of this bill, Representatives VAN DUYNE and SUOZZI, for their leadership in fighting fraud.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 8873, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

HEALTH CARE EFFICIENCY THROUGH FLEXIBILITY ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 5347) to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to ensure the availability of appropriate collection types for quality reporting under the Medicare Shared Savings Program, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 5347

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 ''Health Care Efficiency Through Flexibility Act''.

SEC. 2. ENSURING AVAILABILITY OF APPROPRIATE COLLECTION TYPES FOR QUALITY REPORTING UNDER THE MEDICARE SHARED SAVINGS PROGRAM.

Section 1899(b)(3)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395jjj(b)(3)(B)) is amended—

(1) by striking ''An ACO shall submit'' and inserting the following:

''(i) IN GENERAL.—An ACO shall submit''; and

(2) by adding at the end the following new clauses:

''(ii) REQUIRED AVAILABILITY OF COLLECTION TYPES FOR CERTAIN YEARS.—For performance years 2025 through 2029, the Secretary shall ensure that the following collection types (as described in section 414.1305 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation)) are available with respect to each measure described in subparagraph (A)(i) required to be reported by an ACO under this paragraph:

''(I) Electronic clinical quality measures.

''(II) MIPS clinical quality measures.

''(III) Medicare Clinical Quality Measures for Accountable Care Organizations Participating in the Medicare Shared Savings Program.

''(iii) CLARIFICATION ON APPLICATION OF DATA COMPLETENESS REQUIREMENTS IN CERTAIN CASES.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—In determining whether data submitted by an ACO with respect to a measure described in subparagraph (A)(i) for a performance year beginning on or after January 1, 2026, satisfies the data completeness requirements applicable to such measure under section 414.1340 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation) (as applied pursuant to section 425.512 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation)), the Secretary may not find such data to be unrepresentative of such ACO's performance for such year (as described in paragraph (e) of such section 414.1340) based solely on the fact that such data excludes applicable data from 1 or more ACO participants in such ACO if—

''(aa) such data submitted by the ACO otherwise complies with the data completeness requirements of such section 414.1340; and

''(bb) such ACO demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Secretary that such ACO participant was unable to collect such data through the collection type (as described in clause (ii)) selected by the ACO for the submission of such data.

''(II) DEFINITION.—In this clause, the term 'ACO participant' has the meaning given such term in section 425.20 of title 42, Code of Federal Regulations (or a successor regulation).

''(III) IMPLEMENTATION.—The Secretary may implement this clause by program instruction or otherwise.''.

SEC. 3. PILOT PROGRAM FOR DIGITAL QUALITY MEASURE REPORTING.

Section 1899(b)(3)(B) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395jjj(b)(3)(B)), as amended by section 2, is further amended by adding at the end the following new clause:

''(iv) PILOT PROGRAM FOR DIGITAL QUALITY MEASURE REPORTING.—

''(I) IN GENERAL.—For each of performance years 2028 through 2032, the Secretary shall establish a digital quality measure reporting pilot program (in this clause referred to as the 'program') under which ACOs selected under subclause (II) for such performance year report quality measures specified by the Secretary under subclause (III) for such performance year through a digital quality measure (as defined by the Secretary) collection type specified by the Secretary.

''(II) SELECTION.—The Secretary shall select ACOs to participate in the program for a performance year from ACOs that submit an application at such time and in such form and manner as specified by the Secretary.

''(III) SPECIFICATION OF QUALITY MEASURES.—For each performance year of the program, the Secretary shall specify 2 measures described in subparagraph (A)(i) otherwise required to be reported by ACOs for such performance year for which an ACO selected under subclause (II) shall submit data through the collection type specified in subclause (I).

''(IV) WAIVER OF REQUIREMENT TO REPORT OTHER MEASURES.—The Secretary may not require an ACO selected under subclause (II) for a performance year to report data on any measure described in subparagraph (A)(i) otherwise required to be reported by an ACO under this paragraph for such performance year, other than such a measure specified under subclause (III) for such performance year.

''(V) DISREGARD OF DATA FOR CERTAIN MEASURES.—The Secretary may not take into account any data for a measure specified under subclause (III) for a performance year submitted by an ACO selected under subclause (II) for such performance year, or any data for a measure with respect to which such ACO is not required to report data for such performance year under subclause (IV), in determining—

''(aa) whether such ACO has met quality performance standards established by the Secretary under subparagraph (C) for such performance year; or

''(bb) any score for the quality performance category (as described in section 1848(q)(2)(A)(i)) for an ACO participant (as defined in clause (iii)(II)) in such ACO for such performance year.

''(VI) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide such technical assistance to ACOs selected to participate in the program as is practicable.

''(VII) PROVISION OF INFORMATION.—Not later than December 31, 2032, the Secretary shall publicly post (or include as part of annual rulemaking for this section) the following:

''(aa) An analysis of the program.

''(bb) Any recommendations for increasing submissions of data for measures described in subparagraph (A)(i) through the collection type specified in subclause (I); and

''(cc) A proposed timeline for requiring such measures to be submitted through such collection type.''.

SEC. 4. IMPLEMENTATION FUNDING.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are appropriated, out of any funds in the Treasury not otherwise obligated, $8,000,000 for fiscal year 2026, to remain available until expended, to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Program Management Account for purposes of implementing the amendments made by sections 2 and 3.

(b) MEDICARE IMPROVEMENT FUND.—Section 1898(b)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395iii(b)(1)) is amended by striking ''$2,062,000,000'' and inserting ''$2,054,000,000''.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. SUOZZI) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and submit extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Health Care Efficiency Through Flexibility Act led by Committee on Ways and Means members, the Subcommittee on Health Chairman VERN BUCHANAN and Representative JIMMY PANETTA.

As the lead sponsor of this legislation, Congressman BUCHANAN has been a strong champion for ensuring that our healthcare system is focused on the right outcomes—including improved patient health through chronic disease prevention—rather than Washington paperwork mandates.

This bill ensures that complex reporting requirements do not overwhelm healthcare providers or distract them from their primary job, caring for patients.

Accountable Care Organizations, or ACOs, are groups of healthcare providers who are responsible for improving patient health and reducing spending through value-based care. More than 500 such ACOs, comprising nearly 700,000 medical providers, cared for over 12 million Medicare beneficiaries just last year. In their 14-year history, ACOs have saved taxpayers $12 billion.

ACOs are required to submit data on patient outcomes and operations, known as quality measures, to the Federal Government to track their performance and determine their shared savings.

The current system for reporting quality measures is labor intensive. Some ACOs use as many as 15 different electronic health record systems to track and report this data. One health system spent $5.6 million and 100,000 staff hours on reporting in a single year.

Digital reporting could ease this burden, while potentially saving $14 billion