

S. 5189

At the request of Ms. HIRONO, the name of the Senator from Colorado (Mr. BENNET) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5189, a bill to amend title 10, United States Code, and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1994, to codify and clarify gender neutral standards for members of certain Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

S. 5214

At the request of Mr. TILLIS, the names of the Senator from Idaho (Mr. CRAPO) and the Senator from Nevada (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO) were added as cosponsors of S. 5214, a bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to punish criminal offenses targeting law enforcement officers, and for other purposes.

S. 5219

At the request of Mr. BLUMENTHAL, the name of the Senator from California (Mr. SCHIFF) was added as a cosponsor of S. 5219, a bill to improve end-of-life care.

S. RES. 819

At the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN, the name of the Senator from Maine (Ms. COLLINS) was added as a cosponsor of S. Res. 819, a resolution condemning the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its ongoing human rights abuses, including its use of politically motivated espionage claims to justify arbitrary detention and executions.

S. RES. 826

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 826, a resolution honoring the contributions of small manufacturers of firearms to the economy, culture, and recreational heritage of the United States and recognizing the month of August 2026 as "National Shooting Sports Month".

S. RES. 827

At the request of Mr. RISCH, the names of the Senator from Montana (Mr. DAINES) and the Senator from West Virginia (Mr. JUSTICE) were added as cosponsors of S. Res. 827, a resolution recognizing the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute, Inc. (SAAMI) and commending its work establishing industry standards that ensure the safe interoperability of firearms and ammunition.

AMENDMENT NO. 6733

At the request of Mr. BUDD, the names of the Senator from Louisiana (Mr. CASSIDY), the Senator from Arkansas (Mr. COTTON), the Senator from Iowa (Ms. ERNST) and the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. CRAMER) were added as cosponsors of amendment No. 6733 intended to be proposed to H.R. 6500, a bill to extend duty-free treatment provided with respect to imports from certain countries in Africa under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to extend customs user fees, and for other purposes.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Ms. COLLINS:

S. 5250. A bill to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to decrease fraud related to home health agencies in Medicare, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to introduce the Medicare Home Health Payment Integrity and Protection Act. This legislation would strengthen the Medicare home health program by advancing two complementary goals: protecting the home health program from fraud and strengthening access to these important services for the Americans who need them.

I have long been a strong supporter of home healthcare. In a home visit I made in one of my first years as a Senator, I saw firsthand the extraordinary difference that skilled nurses, therapists, and other home health professionals make in the lives of patients and their families. Every day, these dedicated caregivers enable millions of our Nation's most frail and vulnerable individuals to remain in the comfort, security, and privacy of their home, which is where they most want to be.

Home healthcare not only improves patients' quality of life but also helps avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and nursing home admissions, producing substantial savings for Medicare, Medicaid, and families alike.

For these reasons, we should be strengthening, not weakening, the Medicare home health program.

Yet recent trends present a troubling paradox. Despite the rapid aging of our population, the number of traditional Medicare beneficiaries receiving home health services has declined in recent years, from approximately 3.3 million beneficiaries in 2019 to 2.7 million just 5 years later.

At the same time, nearly everywhere in our country, the number of Medicare-certified home health agencies has also been dropping. According to the most recent report of MedPAC, which is the independent agency analyzing and advising Congress on Medicare, excluding California, more than 500 home health agencies closed between 2019 and 2024, a decline of 5 percent.

The picture is dramatically different in California, however, where the number of Medicare home health agencies has doubled over the same time period. Nearly all of that growth has occurred in Los Angeles County.

If that strikes you as strange, you are in good company. As MedPAC observed, many stakeholders, including the California State Auditor, have concluded that the unusual pattern of home health agency growth and use in Los Angeles County raises "significant program integrity concerns."

In plain language, that means fraud. MedPAC further noted that Los Angeles County has already been identified as a major hotspot for waste, fraud, and abuse in Medicare hospice

services and that the dramatic increase in home health agencies in the same area raises further flags. The California State auditor reported that one office building housed the corporate offices of more than 100 hospice agencies and dozens of home health agencies—a striking example of how organized fraud can exploit weaknesses in Medicare hospice enrollment and oversight.

The concentration of Medicare home health spending in Los Angeles County is its own issue. This can be seen by the lopsided spending generated there. Even though only 2 percent of the Nation's Medicare fee-for-service beneficiaries live in Los Angeles County, that 2 percent generates 9 percent of all Medicare fee-for-service home health expenditures in the entire Nation—roughly 4½ times the expected share.

CMS is fully aware of the fraud problem in Los Angeles County and has responded aggressively. I commend the Agency for doing so. My legislation builds on those efforts by strengthening CMS's ability to stop fraudulent providers before they enter the Medicare Program, ending the "pay and chase" model.

The bill accomplishes this goal by enhancing enrollment screening for owners and managers of agencies operating in objectively high-risk markets, requiring more rigorous oversight of new and high-risk providers through targeted surveys, strengthening oversight of accrediting organizations, and improving verification that Medicare beneficiaries actually received the services billed to the program. Further, the bill requires agencies in high-risk areas to provide documentation showing that they are legitimate businesses, such as proof of liability insurance. The bill also requires more frequent unannounced site visits for agencies that are new, have changed ownership, or are reactivating their billing privileges. Funding to support these efforts is also authorized. These reforms are designed to identify fraudulent providers early while allowing legitimate agencies to focus on delivering quality patient care.

The consequences of fraud extend well beyond the communities in which it occurs. When billions of dollars are improperly siphoned from the Medicare home health program, the result can undermine the integrity of the payment system used to reimburse legitimate providers. Honest home health agencies—particularly those serving rural communities—already face rising labor costs, workforce shortages, and the challenges of providing care across large geographic areas. Inadequate reimbursement threatens their ability to continue serving the seniors who depend upon them.

Protecting the integrity of the Medicare home health program therefore requires more than identifying and prosecuting fraud; it also requires ensuring that legitimate providers are reimbursed fairly for the medically necessary care they provide.

This is the bill's second key objective. To accomplish this, my bill directs CMS to reset the home health base payment amount using 2020 rates, adjusted for inflation, before applying future payment updates. Resetting to 2020 is appropriate because it reflects the first year of the current payment methodology under the Patient-Driven Groupings Model and predates the fraud patterns that later emerged. The bill also addresses a calculation distortion in the current payment methodology and directs CMS to implement appropriate corrections going forward.

This legislation strikes the right balance. It strengthens CMS's ability to prevent fraud before taxpayer dollars are lost, while ensuring that honest providers have the resources necessary to continue delivering high-quality care. It advances both program integrity and payment integrity, protects Medicare beneficiaries, safeguards taxpayer dollars, and helps preserve access to the home health services that allow millions of Americans to receive care safely and independently in their own homes.

I want to note that these program integrity provisions align with those outlined in the Protecting Seniors and Stopping Fraudsters Act, introduced by Rep. VAN DUYNE in May. I look forward to working with her to move our bills forward as quickly as possible.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.

By Mr. REED (for himself and Mr. HAWLEY):

S. 5264. A bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to set requirements for certain operator workstations for fixed route buses, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, today, I am introducing the Bus Operator Safety and Security Act with my colleague from Missouri, Mr. HAWLEY. Our bipartisan bill will address a growing safety concern facing the transit industry: protecting the bus operators who serve as the backbone of our Nation's public transportation system.

Bus operators are being subjected to physical assaults, chemical attacks, and exposure to biohazards for simply carrying out their essential work. In my home State, a Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, RIPTA, busdriver was sprayed in the face with insecticide after asking a passenger to pay their fare. In Missouri, a Kansas City Area Transportation Authority, KCATA, busdriver was attacked with a baseball bat. In Ohio, a Central Ohio Transit Authority, COTA, busdriver was punched in the face after a passenger reached around a partial operator barrier, and in Pennsylvania, a Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, SEPTA, busdriver sustained slash wounds to his face and abdomen when attacked by a passenger. The list goes on.

These attacks are part of a growing nationwide trend. Indeed, assaults on transit workers have increased by more than 36 percent since 2023, with an average of 43 assaults each day in 2025. These alarming statistics underscore the urgent need to better protect the dedicated operators who keep our public transportation systems running safely every day.

To address this growing crisis, the Bus Operator Safety and Security Act would require all new, federally funded buses to be equipped with protective barriers around the operator's seat, providing bus operators with a safer and more secure workspace. These barriers are not cosmetic; they are life-saving. They fully enclose the operator's workstation, preventing unauthorized entry and protecting operators from physical assaults, thrown objects, chemical agents, and other dangerous hazards, while maintaining a clear line of sight so operators can safely perform their jobs.

This is a simple, commonsense solution. These barriers cost between \$3,000 to \$7,000 per bus, yet they can mean the difference between a bus operator making it home safely at the end of the day or becoming the victim of a violent assault.

I am pleased that the bill is supported by the Amalgamated Transit Union, ATU, the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, TTD, the SMART Transportation Division, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFSCME, and the Transport Workers Union of America, TWU. And in Rhode Island, the bill is supported by RIPTA and ATU Local 618. I urge my colleagues to join me and Senator HAWLEY in supporting this commonsense legislation and in working to include it in the next Surface Transportation reauthorization.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 831—RECOGNIZING THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF NORTHWEST MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, STUDENT SUCCESS, AND SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI AND THE UNITED STATES

Mr. WICKER (for himself and Mrs. HYDE-SMITH) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 831

Whereas Tate County Agricultural High School was established in 1915 to provide educational opportunities for the people of North Mississippi and laid the foundation for what would become Northwest Mississippi Community College;

Whereas, for more than a century, the institution has served the educational, work-

force, and community needs of North Mississippi;

Whereas, on September 7, 1926, the institution opened its academic year with college-level instruction, marking the beginning of its continuous service as an institution of higher education;

Whereas, during the formative years of the institution, it earned approval from the Mississippi Junior College Committee, expanded its academic offerings, strengthened its faculty, and developed the academic standards necessary to serve as a model for community college education in Mississippi;

Whereas, in 1928, the institution adopted the name Northwest Mississippi Junior College and expanded its academic offerings to include a second year of collegiate instruction;

Whereas, effective January 2, 1988, the institution officially changed its name from Northwest Mississippi Junior College to Northwest Mississippi Community College, reflecting the expanding mission of the institution to serve the educational, workforce, and community needs of North Mississippi;

Whereas Northwest Mississippi Community College serves an 11-county district consisting of Tate, DeSoto, Panola, Tallahatchie, Tunica, Quitman, Marshall, Calhoun, Lafayette, Yalobusha, and Benton counties through a main campus in Senatobia and campuses and instructional sites in DeSoto, Oxford, Batesville, Olive Branch, Water Valley, and Ashland;

Whereas Northwest Mississippi Community College has expanded educational opportunity throughout North Mississippi through the establishment and growth of instructional locations across its service area, bringing higher education, workforce training, and local community enrichment closer to the communities it serves, including in—

- (1) Senatobia, established in 1926;
- (2) DeSoto, established in 1975;
- (3) Ashland, established in 1980;
- (4) Oxford, established in 1983;
- (5) Olive Branch, established in 1985;
- (6) Batesville, established in 2021; and
- (7) Water Valley, established in 2022;

Whereas, as of the date of adoption of this resolution, Northwest Mississippi Community College serves more than 8,000 students annually and has experienced 13 consecutive semesters of enrollment growth, reflecting the enduring value of the institution and its continued ability to meet the educational and workforce needs of North Mississippi;

Whereas Northwest Mississippi Community College has become one of the largest and most respected community colleges in Mississippi, serving thousands of students annually through academic transfer programs, career and technical education, workforce training, health sciences programs, dual enrollment opportunities, and local community enrichment initiatives;

Whereas Northwest Mississippi Community College has earned national recognition for student success, enrollment growth, workforce development, academic achievement, and institutional excellence, including selection among the premier community colleges in the United States, while expanding educational opportunities through new facilities, innovative programs, and strategic partnerships;

Whereas Northwest Mississippi Community College has expanded educational access and workforce development opportunities through strategic investments in facilities and infrastructure, including the Ranger Center in DeSoto County, the Concourse in Batesville, the Heindl Center for the Performing Arts in Senatobia, and continued improvements to academic, workforce, student, and athletic facilities throughout the district;