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CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, this week, the Senate will once again consider S. 1086 as amended by the House, the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. This is bipartisan legislation that I introduced along with Senators BURR, HARKIN, and ALEXANDER.

A version of this bill was passed by the Senate earlier this year by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 96-2. An amended version passed the House on September 15th, by unanimous consent. I stand here today, on the side of families and children across the nation, encouraging the Senate to once again pass this child care bill and send it to the President's desk to become law.

Before I was the Senator for Maryland, I was a social worker for Baltimore families and worked with children and the elderly. At the dawn of the civil rights movement, I went from being a social worker to a social activist in elected office. Today, I'm a social worker in Congress, working to build opportunities for families throughout America. I stand here today, proud that with this bill, we can make a difference for parents and children across America. Every family deserves child care that is affordable, accessible, and exceptional.

Child care is one of the most important decisions a parent will make when raising their child. But we live in the

age of scrimp and save. Times are tough and budgets are tight. Every day, parents across America struggle to put food on the table, pay their bills, and provide care for their kids. Maybe you are a single parent, working double shifts, wondering if your child is safe and sound, or maybe you are a student, working to get your degree for a better job and a brighter future. But instead of studying statistics, you are calculating the cash you need to pay your babysitter. Those worries weigh heavily on the shoulders of parents everywhere. Our bill helps lift that burden by giving families and children the child care they need to succeed.

That is why I am so proud to move this bill forward. This bill is the product of brilliant bipartisan effort between Senators BURR, HARKIN, ALEXANDER, and myself. We also worked on a bicameral basis with Representatives KLINE and MILLER from the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

This bill reforms and refreshes important child care legislation, so moms and dads earning lower incomes can afford child care for their kids while they go to work or school. Child care is something all families worry about, regardless of income or zip code. People want care that is reliable and undeniable, safe, affordable, and accessible. This bill helps ensure that all children get the care they need and deserve so they and their families can have a better, brighter future.

In 1990, the CCDBG program was first signed into law by President George H.W. Bush to assist working families with the cost of providing child care. It has not been reauthorized since 1996. Through the CCDBG program, the Federal government provides states and Indian tribes and territories with funding. That funding is used to help lower-income families afford child care while parents work, train for work, or attend school. Families are given vouchers based on their income level to help cover costs of care. These vouchers can be used by parents for the provider of their choice: care in the home, at a relative's home, or in a child care center. Every month, CCDBG serves more than 1.5 million children in the United States, including 19,000 children in Maryland.

Why is this program so important? Because child care is expensive. It is the highest household expense faced by dual income households and averages \$14,872 per year for two children. In Maryland, families spend, on average, 20% of their family income on child care. This is about \$14,000 per year or \$249 per week. Keep in mind that the Department of Health and Human Services recommends that families not spend more than 10% of their income on child care. Child care isn't a luxury, it is a necessity. It shouldn't reach beyond the bounds of the family budget, especially in these tough economic times.

CCDBG has not been reauthorized since 1996. At the time, the program

was envisioned solely as workforce aid—something to help moms and dads get back to work. This was and remains an important goal, but we have learned a lot since 1996. What we know today, but didn't know 18 years ago, is that the most rapid period of development for the brain happens in the first five years of life. That is why it is so imperative that we ensure our young children are in high-quality child care programs that give kids building blocks for a lifetime of success. It is not enough to ensure that kids have someplace to go. We must ensure that they go someplace safe that nurtures their development, challenges their mind, and prepares them for school. The current program is outdated. It does not go far enough in promoting and supporting high-quality child care, safeguarding health and safety of children, ensuring children have continuity of care, and focusing on infant and toddler care.

Senators BURR, HARKIN, ALEXANDER, and I got together more than two years ago. We held three bipartisan Subcommittee on Children and Families hearings, got input from more than fifty stakeholder organizations, worked with every member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to put together a comprehensive reauthorization bill. It does not solve every program for every family, but it does a lot of good for families relying on CCDBG.

First, the reauthorization requires states to prioritize quality. States will be required to eventually set aside at least 9% of funding for quality initiatives, 5% more than current law. States will choose what is best for them, whether it is training of the workforce, supporting early learning guidelines, expanding quality rating systems, or improving quality and quantity of child care programs and services for infants and toddlers.

Second, it requires that providers meet health requirements so parents know that the individuals taking care of their children are capable and competent when it comes to handling first aid and CPR, child abuse, sudden infant death syndrome, or shaken baby syndrome. Third, it requires mandatory background checks. And lastly, this reauthorization gives families using the CCDBG program more stability by ensuring that their kids get care for at least one year, even if a parent sees a change in their pay check.

We know that increasing funding for this program is important. More kids and families are in need of access. That is why as Chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am pushing for \$2.46 billion for child care in the FY15 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This is an increase of \$100 million over FY14. This funding would ensure that countless additional children have access to this vital program, bringing more families of very modest means peace of mind when it comes to child care.

I am fighting hard for this increase, because I know quality child care is worth every penny. I could not have done it without Senator HARKIN as the Labor-HHS Chairman. And rest assured, we will keep fighting for this child care program. So you see, we put money in a program through appropriations channels and now we are improving the program through authorizing channels.

I would like to thank my partner in crime, Senator RICHARD BURR, who was Ranking Member of Children and Families when I was Chair of that Subcommittee. Senator BURR's unwavering commitment to reauthorizing this program and ensuring safety of children is unrivaled, unparalleled, and unmatched. It has been a pleasure working with Senator BURR and his staff, Chris Toppings. They deserve a lot of credit for getting us here today.

I would also like to extend a sincere thanks to Chairman HARKIN and Ranking Member ALEXANDER, as well as former Ranking Member ENZI, and all of their staffs. Senators HARKIN, ALEXANDER, and ENZI have been involved in drafting the bill from the outset. They have worked to make sure that the bill remained a priority for the HELP Committee. The expertise of their staffs has been invaluable throughout this process. I want to thank Senator HARKIN's staff, Mario Cardona and Mildred Otero, and Senator ALEXANDER's staff, Peter Oppenheim and Patrick Murray. I would also like to thank our House colleagues, Representatives KLINE and MILLER, for making this bill a priority and for getting it done.

Every working parent with children, no matter their income level, worries about child care. What's affordable? What's accessible? Will my child be safe? Where can I get the best care for my kid? The CCDBG program has given many families over many years peace of mind, but we can and should be doing more to improve child care for children, parents, and providers alike. It is long past time to revitalize, refresh, and reform this vitally important program. It is my hope that we can move swiftly to pass this bill and send it to the President's desk. It has been 18 years in the making. Let's not wait any longer.

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, November 9, 1989, was the day the Berlin Wall came down, a day we can all be proud. It is a day that reminds us of the power of democratic values and ideals.

I am filled with happiness as I remember that wonderful day 25 years ago. I am a proud American, there is no other country blessed with such opportunity, but the roots of my heritage lie in Poland. I grew up in a home that kept the heritage of the old country alive. As a child of World War II, Europe has always been fundamental to my life.

Together with my family I watched Poland fall, along with Hungary and the Czech Republic and others, behind the Iron Curtain. I remember when Poland was sold out at Yalta and Potsdam because of an ill-conceived agreement. These countries became captive nations.

We watched as a wall was built in Berlin. Those in East Berlin found themselves behind not only the Iron Curtain but the Berlin Wall as well, cut off from family, friends, and their livelihoods.

I am proud that Americans stood up at this moment—the famous Berlin Airlift provided those in West Berlin during the Berlin Blockade. The United States, with our allies, delivered basic necessities, food, and fuel. We all stood with President Kennedy as he declared “Ich bin ein Berliner.” American leadership was instrumental in making small cracks in the wall. As Madeline Albright, whose heritage is also rooted in Eastern Europe like my own, has said of the United States, “We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future.”

The wall began to crumble when an obscure Polish electrician named Lech Walesa jumped over a wall in a shipyard in Gdansk. It began with the Solidarity movement. From this, a people's revolution was sparked in Central Europe.

And thanks to the nonviolent protestors, the dissidents, such as Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia, and the political leadership from President Reagan and Maggie Thatcher and members of Congress the Wall came down.

I stand here to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall, bringing down the Iron Curtain. Twenty five years ago, as a citizen of a strong democratic United States of America, I joined President Reagan when he said, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.” I take this opportunity to stand together with my countrymen and celebrate our democratic values, our respect for human rights, and our freedom. The United States is a great nation, and through our action, commitment, and resolve, we will continue to bring down walls of oppression.

This is a great occasion for all of us and for the world and deserves our remembrance.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

CORPORAL THOMAS A. BLAIR

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, it is my honor to pay tribute to the life and sacrifice of Marine Cpl Thomas A. Blair of Wagoner, OK who lost his life on March 24, 2003, from injuries sustained during a lengthy battle with insurgents while serving his Nation in Nasiriyah, Iraq.

The son of Alfred Jr. and Nancy Hinton Blair, Tommy was born July 7, 1978, in Wagoner, OK. After graduating from Broken Arrow High School, he entered the Marine Corps in 1997 and was assigned to the 2nd Low Altitude Air

Defense Battalion, Marine Air Control Group-28, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, Cherry Point, NC.

Tommy was posthumously awarded the Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal for helping pull nine wounded marines into an armored vehicle before it was hit by at least four enemy rocket-propelled grenades and then a missile fired from an American attack plane. He was among 18 marines killed that day in fighting around Nasiriyah.

Tommy was laid to rest in Ozark Memorial Park Cemetery in Joplin, MO, and is survived by his father Alfred Jr., mother Nancy, and brother Alfred III.

“He was a young man that would give the shirt off his back if someone needed it,” recalled his older brother, Marine SSG Alfred Blair, III. “He lived life to the fullest and enjoyed every minute of every day. In his first letter home to our mom, he said he was doing what he had been trained to do and was proud to be doing it for his country.”

Today we remember Marine CPL Thomas A. Blair, the first known native Oklahoman to lose his life in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was a young man who loved his family and country and gave his life as a sacrifice for freedom.

CAPTAIN JOHN J. BORIA

Mr. President, I also pay tribute to the life and sacrifice of Air Force Capt. John J. Boria of Broken Arrow, OK, who died on September 6, 2004, after injuries sustained in a all-terrain vehicle accident while serving his nation in Doha, Qatar.

Javy, as he was known by his family and friends was born on August 12, 1975. After graduating from Union High School in Tulsa, OK, in 1993, I nominated this bright young man to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy. He spent a year at the Academy's Prep School before entering the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he graduated in 1998. Upon completing flight training, he was assigned as an instructor and KC-135 pilot at the 911th Refueling Squadron at Grand Forks Air Force Base, ND, and was deployed to Qatar to work in the Combined Air Operations Center in June 2004.

Funeral services were held on September 14, 2004, at Broken Arrow Assembly of God Church, with internment at the U.S. Air Force Academy Cemetery in Colorado Springs, CO. Javy is survived by his parents John and Wanda and brother Joe.

His favorite Bible verse in John 15 states, depending on the translation, that “no greater love has a man than he lay down his life for his friends,” his mother said. When discussing becoming an organ donor with his mother during his junior year at the Academy, Javy said, “I want to be a donor too. If I die and part of me could be used, it could give somebody else a chance to live the life that I won't have.”

Today we remember Air Force Capt. John J. Boria, a young man who loved his family and country and gave his life as a sacrifice for freedom.