Academy of Pediatrics, the Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the Children's Defense Fund, and over 130 other organizations.

A third concern I have heard is that the time frame for assessing youth to determine whether they need residential treatment is too short. Under the legislation, a State can receive a Federal match for up to 2 weeks for any foster care placement that is allowable under current law. That means placements like child care institutions, shelters, group homes, and family foster homes for up to 2 weeks. After those 2 weeks, in order to receive a Federal match for room and board, a child may only be served in a family foster home, a supervised independent living placement for youth 18 and older, a facility specializing in serving pregnant and parenting youth, or a qualified residential treatment program. If a child is served in a qualified residential treatment program, the State still has up to 30 days to perform an assessment. That means the State has up to 6 weeks to perform assessments to determine the appropriateness of a child's placement. And even then, if the residential treatment program is deemed NOT to be in the child's best interest, the State has an additional 30 days to receive Federal funding on behalf of that child to find a more appropriate placement. That adds up to nearly 3 months for the States to continue to receive Federal funding while determining the best placement for a child. Let me tell you, 10 weeks is a long time in the life of a vulnerable kid and should be plenty of time to find an appropriate placement.

In addition to these technical questions, some just say the change is coming too fast. For example, a newspaper recently reported that officials in one particular State warned the bill ''could worsen the state's already worrisome shortage of foster care beds. . . .'' and that it could ''disqualify about 3,000 slots in group homes and institutional settings'' from Federal financial help. To my mind, it can be too easy in this debate to lose sight of the fact that right now, a lot of vulnerable youngsters are in desperate circumstances. So let's focus for a moment on the question of group homes in that particular State.

Last year, the State in question lost a class-action lawsuit over its foster care program. The lawsuit found that the State violated the constitutional rights of foster children by exposing them to unreasonable risks in a system where children ''often age out of care more damaged than when they entered.'' I want to repeat that finding because, in my view, it speaks volumes, that children ''often age out of care more damaged than when they entered.''

The U.S. district judge who wrote the decision directed the State to stop placing certain children in unsafe settings such as foster group homes that lack 24–hour supervision. At question was whether group homes should continue to operate at all, given concerns that they cause ''an unreasonable risk of harm'' to foster children. The court heard testimony that, in foster group homes that mix younger children with older children, sexual abuse ''is usual rather than unusual.'' The court heard stories of one foster boy who was ''sexually abused almost every night by one of the bigger boys in the home,'' while the caretakers were asleep on the other side of the house. So in my judgement, if that is the way things are now, then that is a situation that cries out for change. It is time to take a fresh approach that will do a better job of protecting kids and families.

Here is my bottom line. The weight of the status quo is severe, and it falls heaviest on the thousands of foster kids living in quiet struggle.

Doing nothing is easy, I realize that. But it is long past time for the Congress to overcome the inertia of the status quo. And the fact is most of the reforms you are seeing today are incremental—foisted upon States in decrees, settlement agreements, and court orders in class action lawsuits.

My home State of Oregon is no exception. Oregon's Department of Human Services was just hit by a $60 million lawsuit. Too often, States fail to provide for the most basic safety for these vulnerable kids, and that is why advocates are turning to the courts for change.

In recent years, the advocacy organization Children's Rights has filed class action lawsuits in Arizona, Connecticut, D.C., Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Absent reforms and partnership with the Federal Government, unfortunately, these types of lawsuits that produce only slow improvements will continue to be one of few clear avenues to drive change. It is time Congress stepped up. The standards laid out in this bill are supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Defense Fund and countless others. The experts agree with our premise, that group home care should be used only when it is clinically necessary.

This bill is not perfect, but no legislation is ever perfect. I have been clear that there will be opportunities—both through the regulatory and legislative processes—to strengthen this legislation and build on it. But in my judgement, this bill gets us closer to a world where foster care is needed less often, a system where the priority is keeping children and families together.

If this bill were to come before the Senate in an up-or-down vote, I believe it would sail through on a bipartisan basis. It is the right policy for kids, and it is the right policy for taxpayers, whose investments in foster care today aren't helping children and families the way they should.

I urge my colleagues to support the Family First Prevention Services Act. The Senate can and must get this done in the months ahead and send it to the president's desk.

As civil rights icon Marian Wright Edelman said, ''Don't make our most vulnerable children wait longer'' for the help they need.

ANNIVERSARY AND REAUTHORIZATION OF THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, 51 years ago today—July 14, 1965—President Johnson signed the Older Americans Act into law, solidifying our commitment to America's seniors and creating critical programs to ensure that all Americans can age with dignity and security. I am very pleased that President Obama signed the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act on April 19, 2016. My view is that a nation is judged not by how many billionaires and millionaires it has, but instead by how it treats the most vulnerable people among us.

I would like to thank Chairman ALEXANDER and Ranking Member MURRAY for their efforts in getting this reauthorization passed into law. I would also like to acknowledge the many organizations representing tens of millions of Americans who worked with me and my staff to get this bill to President Obama, including the National Council on Aging, Meals on Wheels America, the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, and others.

Every day in my State of Vermont and around this country, millions of seniors are struggling with the difficult choice they must make with their limited budgets—whether to buy food, medicine, or keep a roof over their heads. These are not the choices seniors in this country should be forced to make.

More than half of older households have no retirement savings and are just one bad fall or illness away from economic catastrophe. The Older Americans Act provides important long-term services and supports that help keep older Vermonters and seniors across this country healthy and out of poverty. The Older Americans Act provides a broad range of services including home-delivered and congregate meals, transportation services, family caregiver support, preventive health services, and many supportive services. The law also funds job training, legal assistance, and elder abuse prevention and protection services.

I, along with my staff, worked on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act for the past several years. During that time, we held hearings on senior hunger and convened listening sessions with advocacy groups to learn more about the best way to extend these programs. What I heard over and over

again was simple: The law is working well, but it needs more funding to keep up with rising costs and a growing senior population. We must protect and expand funding for these important programs.

The simple fact is the amount of funding dedicated for these important programs is a disgrace. As a point of comparison, while funding for other programs has risen by 11 percent since 2009, Older Americans Act funding has dropped 7 percent over that same time. Funding for these crucial programs has not even kept up with inflation. That is why, for the past several years, I have led an appropriations request letter asking for a 12 percent increase in funding for the Older Americans Act. A 12 percent increase would make a meaningful difference for states struggling to provide services to their growing senior populations.

Some of the most important and well-known services funded by the Older Americans Act are the meals programs, often provided by Meals on Wheels. A Government Accountability Office, GAO, report I requested last year found that fewer than 10 percent of low-income seniors who needed a meal delivered to their homes in 2013 received one. The study also found that one in three low-income seniors are ''food insecure,'' yet fewer than 5 percent receive a meal at home or at a senior center. That is unacceptable.

Investing in senior nutrition programs is not only the moral thing to do, it is the financially smart thing to do. Proper nutrition can keep people out of long-term care and emergency rooms. Meal delivery is also a good opportunity for visiting with an isolated senior who might otherwise go days without seeing another person.

Another critical OAA program is the Senior Community Service Employment Program, SCSEP, which provides job training and employment services for older adults. Seniors are matched with part-time jobs at organizations in the community and many times these positions turn into permanent employment, increasing seniors' financial security.

Senior centers are another important way the Older Americans Act supports the needs of seniors in our communities. The reauthorization includes some policy changes to modernize senior centers to help ensure people are taking part in activities like group meals, afternoon activities, and exercise classes.

Another crucial service I strongly hope receives full funding is the Senior Medicare Patrol Program, SMP, which helps protect seniors and their families from health care fraud, errors, and abuse. We have bipartisan agreement that this is an important, cost-saving program, and if Congress does not appropriate sufficient funding for SMP, then those funds should be distributed from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' Health Care Fraud and Abuse Control Program so the program does not experience a cut.

I am pleased that this title II of this bill continues funding for several important resource and information centers, including the Pension Counseling Program and the National Education and Resource Center on Women and Retirement Planning. These programs serve older adults across the nation by providing much-needed information on pensions, retirement issues, and avoiding poverty and financial fraud.

The number of Americans age 60 and over will grow from about 65 million today to 92 million by 2030. Our most vulnerable populations need to see that we care and are here to serve and support them.

Funding must keep up with the increases we see in the cost of living for seniors, including housing, food, transportation, and prescription drugs. The Older Americans Act reauthorization had the unanimous consent of all Senate and House Members and committed to a 7 percent increase in funding over the next 3 years. I am hopeful my colleagues on the Senate Appropriations Committee will use their authority to continue to meet or exceed this funding goal for these critically important programs. I will continue to advocate strongly for these funding increases.

The truth is that the priorities we hold—treating seniors with respect, making sure seniors have the support they need—have the overwhelming support of the American people. These principles are among the foundations of a just and fair society where people look forward to growing old. I thank my Senate and House colleagues for their support of this important reauthorization bill and President Obama for signing it into law. I am pleased to recognize the anniversary of the passage of the Older Americans Act today.

95TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HAWAIIAN HOMES COMMISSION ACT

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, July 9, 2016, marked the 95th anniversary of the enactment of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, legislation that has changed the lives of thousands of native Hawaiians in the State of Hawaii.

This legislation was made possible by the vision of Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole.

After the annexation of Hawaii, Prince Kuhio continued to serve his people as Hawaii's second delegate in Congress.

When Prince Kuhio took office in 1902, he was determined to improve the lives of native Hawaiians. Although he served as a nonvoting delegate, he championed the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act to create a trust of nearly 200,000 acres of land that previously belonged to the monarchs of the Hawaiian Kingdom. By setting aside this land, Congress intended to ensure the livelihood of native Hawaiians, whose population had been reduced from as many as, according to some estimates, 800,000 prior to 1778 to a little over 20,000 by 1920.

In a letter that Prince Kuhio circulated to the Senate in 1920, he shared the results of an extensive investigation and survey that noted the exceedingly high mortality rate of native Hawaiians. The survey justified the need to return native Hawaiians to the land, to reconnect with their sense of place, and elevate their well-being by providing stable housing and opportunities to improve their livelihood. Prince Kuhio shepherded the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act through both the House and Senate, and President Warren Harding signed the bill into law on July 9, 1921.

In 1924, the first homestead in Kalamaula on the island of Molokai became home to 42 Native Hawaiians who began harvesting vegetables and raising animals to sell at local markets.

Today nearly 10,000 Native Hawaiian beneficiaries and their families live on agricultural, pastoral, or residential homestead lots in over 60 communities across Hawaii.

With Hawaii's admission into the Union in 1959, the State of Hawaii was tasked with administering the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, a responsibility primarily led by the State's Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. At the Federal level, Congress has continued to live up to its commitments to the Hawaiian community, first established by the HHCA, through continued funding for programs focused on planning, development, housing construction, and home loan programs to support the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands in its mission, as well as home loans and guarantees to support Hawaiian Homes beneficiaries.

On the 95th anniversary of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, we recognize and thank Prince Kuhio for his vision and sincere aloha for the well-being of Native Hawaiians.

The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act has made a difference in thousands of lives and set the foundation for acknowledging the trust relationship between the Native Hawaiian community and the Federal Government. Today the Federal Government continues this trust relationship by providing funds to support housing, health care, education, and other resources for the benefit of the Native Hawaiian community.

However, there is still much to be done to assist Hawaii's indigenous population. I will continue to work with Congress, the executive branch, the State of Hawaii, and the Native Hawaiian community to not only safeguard Prince Kuhio's landmark legislation and legacy, but to ensure it, and the community he worked so hard to assist, will continue to thrive.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, today I wish to honor MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, FL, during its 75th anniversary year.