About 1 week later the Washington Post confirmed that the influx of unaccompanied Central American children is ''being driven in large part by the perception they will be allowed to stay under the Obama administration's immigration policies.''

I mention these stories because they highlight the all-to-predictable consequences of failing to enforce U.S. immigration law.

So much of law enforcement is the deterrent value—in other words, stopping people from breaking the law in the first instance, not just catching them after they actually break it. And sending the message ''Get here if you can, and you might too be one of the ones who win the lucky immigration lottery and get to stay in the United States'' is a huge magnet for illegal immigration and it undermines—indeed, it guts the deterrent value of enforcing the law. And for what? The President reportedly, unless he rethinks this misguided strategy, will provide some form of temporary relief that will not even be able to be implemented before he leaves office in 2 years, with uncertainty for these immigrants and their families as to what is going to happen beyond.

How he is drawing the line is beyond me. I read that apparently the reports that have been dribbled out in the press—and, of course, this town is famous for intentional leaks to sort of issue trial balloons to see how people are going to react. Well, if the trial balloons are correct, if the stories are correct, the President's order will cover roughly 40 percent of the people here in violation of our immigration laws—40 percent. So why did he decide to stop at 40 percent and not do 60 percent or 80 percent or 100 percent? What about the people who have been waiting patiently in line, complying with our immigration laws? To have these other millions of people jump ahead of them and be given some form of legal status is not fair to them, and it certainly doesn't encourage people's compliance with the rules or the law.

Then we have to look at who benefits the most. And I am not talking about the immigrants; I am talking about the criminal organizations. This is part of how they operate and their business model. Such criminal organizations will be the biggest beneficiaries of the President's Executive order, which would make it even harder for our friends in Mexico to reduce violence and uphold the rule of law. It would be like a pipeline of additional money and resources into the cartels. And the cartels don't care whether they traffic in children, whether they traffic in drugs or weapons. That is how they make money. That is why they exist. That is what they do. And this ill-advised action by the President would do nothing but ensure that a pipeline of money will continue to flow into these criminal organizations.

Time magazine reported:

Cartels control most of Mexico's smuggling networks through which victims are moved, while they also take money from pimps and brothels operating in their territories.

Yet, again, President Obama just doesn't seem to care.

He also doesn't seem to care that his Executive action would harm our opportunity to reform our broken legal immigration system. Republicans and Democrats alike have ideas for how to reform our immigration system, and many of them have bipartisan support. We do know that a comprehensive bill—we have tried to pass one of those for 10 years, and it hasn't worked, so it makes sense to me to try to break it down into smaller pieces and try to build consensus for those, get them across the floor of the House and the Senate and on the President's desk—even on a controversial subject such as immigration. Yet the President has now appeared to decide to trample the normal legislative process and to do immigration policy by fiat.

What about the 60 percent who won't be covered by his Executive order? They don't get any relief under his Executive order. They are going to need to look to Congress to know what the rules are.

So in the President's desperate attempt to placate some very vocal activist groups and to make up for years of hollow promises, he has decided to flout the rule of law and end up making real immigration reform that much harder to pass.

I saw a Congressman from South Carolina, TREY GOWDY, who said: During the first 2 years the President had 60 Democrats in the Senate and controlled the House of Representatives. If immigration reform was such a priority for the President, why didn't he do that?

Well, don't just take my word for it that this will make our job much more difficult.

The junior Senator from Maine, an Independent but a Member of the Democratic caucus, said of the President's Executive amnesty: I think it will create a backlash in the country that could actually set the cause back and inflame our politics in a way that I don't think will be conducive to solving the problem.

I mentioned a moment ago that the results of this anticipated action are all too predictable. So I would ask the President: Why in the world would you want to encourage children to make one of the most dangerous journeys from Central America through Mexico and be subject to the tender mercies of these cartels, which care nothing about them? Why on Earth would you want to establish yet another big incentive for people to enter our country illegally? And why on Earth would you want to help contribute to yet another humanitarian crisis on the Texas-Mexico border?

I would urge the President, in the strongest of terms, to respect the rule of law and the democratic process and to give the new Congress that will convene in January a chance to do our job. I don't underestimate the difficulty of dealing with our broken immigration system, but I don't think we have a choice. We do not have a choice. We must. And it will not be something I will like 100 percent; it won't be something any Senator or Congressman will like 100 percent. But that shouldn't cause us to shrink from our duty.

If the President is actually interested in having his last 2 years in office be more productive than simply a lame-duck session, he needs to work with the Congress rather than go around Congress. I urge him to put the Constitution ahead of his campaign promises and to consider the likely human cost in Mexico and elsewhere of such a lawless policy change.

Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, a parliamentary inquiry: What is the pending business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is in morning business.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I wish to speak on a legislative matter on which we will be voting later on this evening. I yield myself 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

CCDBG REAUTHORIZATION

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, in a few minutes we will be voting on the child care and development block grant reauthorization bill. I am here to urge my colleagues to vote for final passage.

This bill is authored by myself, working shoulder to shoulder with Senator RICHARD BURR of North Carolina, under our chair and ranking member, Senators HARKIN and ALEXANDER.

On this bill we showed that we can actually work together to get things done. We worked across the aisle and across the dome with our counterparts in the House. Today we have an opportunity to pass a bill that will actually help American families with one of the biggest challenges they face—affordable childcare.

Everywhere I go in Maryland I hear young mothers and not-so-young mothers and grandmothers and actually dads saying that we need childcare that is affordable, accessible, reliable, and safe. This Child Care and Development Block Grant Act will meet those compelling human needs. It focuses on families of modest means—parents who want to work or get ready for work by going to school but can't afford childcare.

I wish to take a second to talk about the process and where we stand. This is

a bipartisan bill. It is the result of more than 2 years of work, three hearings on the HELP Committee, hundreds of meetings of stakeholders. The House unanimously passed the bill, and last week the Senate voted 96 to 1 on a cloture vote. It is time now to take the bill over the finish line and vote tonight.

This bill began in 1990, when we created the childcare program as part of our first step towards welfare reform. Eligible families received vouchers to pay for childcare of their choice, whether it is a large daycare center, a small in-home daycare center or faith-based.

This program is important because childcare for parents is significantly expensive. Childcare is the highest household expense faced by dual-income families. The average childcare for two children is about $15,000 a year. In some places that is tuition at a prep school—$15,000 to $20,000 a year. It is expensive whether you are a two-parent household or a single-parent household. For middle-class families it is really tough, and for those earning the minimum wage it is out of reach, and the costs keep increasing.

Last year, the cost of childcare actually grew eight times faster than the average family income. It is not that childcare alone increased, but of course we believe family income has been stagnant for 8 years. So we have to do something about raising the income as well as raising childcare standards and the ability to provide childcare.

Childcare is important because it helps people. In my own State this bill will give parents the kind of childcare vouchers needed, helping 1.5 million children be able to have childcare. In my own home State of Maryland this bill will help as many as 19,000 families get childcare. This is really a pretty big deal. In Maryland, childcare costs about $13,000 a year.

I held roundtables across the State. I sat in classrooms, at conference tables, and meetings listening in Baltimore County and Allegany County. I heard from parents struggling to pay childcare in this age of scrimp and save. I have heard from teachers worried about children not being prepared for a lifetime of learning. I heard from the American Academy of Pediatrics that is concerned about children staying healthy. I heard from the good folks at the Maryland Family Network, who are worried about quality, safety, and the certification of childcare.

I believe that many of the best ideas and recommendations come from the people, so I brought those ideas to Washington and sat down across the table with my colleague Senator RICHARD BURR to really talk about these issues and how we could hammer out a bill that was affordable to the taxpayer and yet reliable for parents.

One size doesn't fit all when it comes to our kids. What I heard over and over again were concerns about availability, about quality, and also affordability. My bill—the Mikulski, Burr, Harkin, Alexander or whatever order we can put it in—makes childcare better. It makes it safer, it makes it more reliable, and it also focuses on helping children to be school-ready, to be learning-ready.

It requires, first of all, in terms of safety, comprehensive background checks. Only 13 States require comprehensive background checks for childcare providers. We require more background checks for mall security guards than we do for our own children. This is unacceptable. Parents deserve peace of mind knowing that their children are safe from anyone who could possibly have a criminal record. Under our bill, 50 States will be required to do this.

It also strengthens health and safety standards. Listening to both concerned parents and the American Academy of Pediatrics, we will have health and safety standards. Childcare providers will be trained in first aid and CPR, in the prevention of sudden infant death syndrome, and also how to respond to food allergies. This is big. Our children come and some of those little guys and girls really have some significant health challenges.

It also requires inspection of facilities. Currently, many States do not require inspection of all childcare facilities. The Washington Post recently found that 43 children have died since 2004 in unregulated childcare centers in Virginia. We have now corrected that where facilities will actually be inspected to make sure they are safe. It also will make sure that inspectors will be looking for anything that presents a danger to a child—an unsecured swimming pool, unsafe sleeping arrangements, and fire hazards. It will improve reliability and stability of care.

Now, we really focused on improving quality of child care. What that means is we have significant sums, which means that States have to invest in training and professional development of childcare workers. It also will evaluate what is working and what isn't. We developed an improved quality rating system to give parents—the consumer—information to pick the right care.

This bill will provide vouchers to people who are at the minimum wage or lower. In my own State, to qualify for this type of voucher subsidy, it is income-based. In Maryland, for a family of two to be eligible for the CCDBG, their incomes cannot exceed $24,000. A family of four cannot have an income that exceeds $35,700. The children must be less than 13 years old, and the children must live with parents who are working or enrolled in an education program that is leading to a job.

This is really good. But this bill—as good as it is—it is only the first step in childcare. It can't be the only step. So while we are looking for how to help parents be able to work, particularly those at the minimum-wage level, we have to be able to look also at our middle-class families. That is why I was happy to join Senator KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND in introducing the childcare tax deduction bill, S. 1975. This bill would allow all families to deduct the cost of childcare as a business expense. Imagine that—to actually be able to do this. So many women in the middle class also find that the cost of childcare is so expensive. With this bill families can deduct up to $14,000 in child care expenses from the amount of taxes they owe. We have to show that we are on the side of families, that we are on the side of the middle class, by offering a substantial tax deduction for childcare; and we have to show that we are on the side of the people who want to be middle class, who are working harder, going to school to be able to move ahead and move into that middle class, and that they have the childcare bill. This legislation, the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act, will make a significant step forward. I urge my colleagues to help and support this.

When I worked on this bill, to me it is not about numbers and statistics—19,000 or 1 million children or so on. It is about people in my own home State—whether it is the single mom in Baltimore County who, due to some major changes, found that she was needing to work full time instead of part time but was barely above the minimum wage. She wondered how she was going to have that job at the minimum wage but have childcare that was safe. When she went to the department of social services, she found a childcare subsidy that could help her be able to work today, have her children in daycare today, and lay the groundwork for a better job tomorrow.

Then there was Theresa, a single mom in Prince George's County. She has four children. They were enrolled in a childcare program while she worked in another. She was making $23,000 a year—again, below the minimum wage. Thanks to the voucher program, she was able to provide her children with childcare, actually work in the field, and begin to get the kind of training that could enable her to move on up to being a childcare worker.

It is about these people who want their child to be safe and secure. They want to make sure they are going to do the best and be able to continue to work in our society, make sure their children are taken care of, and also that we are able to provide this important step.

I hope we pass this bill tonight. I also hope that we develop a comprehensive childcare approach so that we are helping those at the minimum wage and slightly above tonight, but we also want to be able to help the middle class.

Remember what our goal is. We need to focus on the day-to-day needs of our constituents. What does that mean in terms of national policy? What we need to look at is for those who are middle class—through their hard work, their

education and determination, however they get to be there—that they have a government and a Tax Code on their side, and for those who are trying to get to the middle class, that they have an opportunity ladder and the self-help tools that enable them to move ahead.

I really hope my colleagues vote for this bill and we move it to the President's desk for signature.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that a CCDBG fact sheet be printed in the RECORD.

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

CCDBG FACT SHEET

S. 1086—THE CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CCDBG) ACT OF 2014

The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014

This bipartisan bill (S. 1086) was introduced by Senators Mikulski, Burr, Harkin, and Alexander. It reauthorizes, refreshes, reforms, and revitalizes the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program.

What the CCDBG Program Does

The CCDBG program was first signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1990 to assist working families with the cost of providing child care. It has not been reauthorized since 1996.

CCDBG is the primary source of federal funding for child care assistance. CCDBG is administered to states in formula block grants. States use the funding to help low-income families gain access to quality, affordable child care and after-school programs while parents work, train for work, or attend school. Assistance is administered through vouchers or certificates, which can be used by parents for the provider or program of their choice—whether in a family child care home, with a relative or friend, or in a child care center.

Who the CCDBG Program Serves

CCDBG serves more than 1.6 million children every month.

Eligibility Requirements for CCDBG Assistance

There are certain requirements that must be met for families to be eligible for CCDBG assistance:

Family income cannot exceed 85% of the state median (states have flexibility to adopt income eligibility limits below this federal maximum, and generally do)

Example: In MD, for a family of two to be eligible for CCDBG funds, their annual income cannot exceed $24,277; a family of four cannot have an income that exceeds $35,702

Kids must be less than 13 years old

Kids must live with parents who are working, enrolled in school/training, or be in need of protective services

Amount of Subsidy

The CCDBG program generally requires that families contribute to the cost of care on a sliding fee scale basis. Federal regulations do allow states to waive child care fees for families with incomes at or below poverty guidelines. HHS has suggested that a family's fee should be no more than 10% of its income.

In FYI2, the average monthly subsidy paid to a family with an infant younger than 1 year was $467. The average monthly subsidy paid to a family with a child between the age of 5–6 years of age was $365.

Funding Level for the CCDBG Program

In the FY14 omnibus, the CCDBG program was funded at $2.36 billion. This is an increase of $154 million above FY13. This funding increase will ensure 22,000 additional children will receive child care assistance.

In addition to discretionary funding, mandatory funding exists for child care subsidies (authorized in Social Security Act). In FY14, there were $2.9 billion in mandatory funds—for a total of approximately $5.3 billion for child care subsidies.

Cost of Child Care

Child care is the highest household expense faced by dual income households, averaging $14,872 a year for 2 kids.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I want to speak in support of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014, the bill that is before us. It has taken us a long time to get to this point. I cannot be more pleased that we are on the verge of sending this legislation to the President for his signature.

We know—we know—that learning begins at birth and the preparation for education begins even before birth. That is why I am very excited about my committee's bill to reauthorize the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act. This bill will lead to important reforms and improvements to the early care and education of our Nation's children.

This bipartisan legislation is also a big win for working families. It helps make it possible for over 1.5 million kids to receive quality childcare every month. The last time we reauthorized the child care block grant was 1996. When we did that, childcare was seen principally as a work support activity and only incidentally as something that could have a great impact on the development of children. Today, backed by impressive scientific research, we know that childcare settings can and should be much more. In addition to providing critical work support for the parents, early childhood settings are now widely recognized as a rich early learning opportunity for all children.

So it is not just childcare—we are taking care and watching them so they don't get in trouble—it is now childcare that is part of the learning process. As I said, it begins at birth and even before birth. Because much of a child's intellect and skills development begin before he or she begins kindergarten, we need to give all children every opportunity to reach their full potential at this early stage. This means supporting access to high-quality early learning programs, including high-quality childcare. That is why reauthorizing the child care development block grant with the array of reforms and improvements is so important.

This bill contains many commonsense improvements to a program that hasn't been reauthorized, as I said, since 1996. That is nearly a whole generation. We have improved the health and safety requirements by asking States to increase the amount of funding they set aside to serve infants and toddlers. We require pre-service training and ongoing professional development for childcare workers. We ask that States inspect childcare providers at least once a year—hopefully more, but at least once a year.

I am particularly excited about the set-aside that we have in the bill to improve access to and quality of care for infants and toddlers. This is something I included for several years in my appropriations subcommittee bill, and I am pleased that it is now an important component of this reauthorization. These are the kinds of commonsense, research-based activities and services that any parent would want for their child, and they deserve it. That is why I am so pleased we are now on the cusp of passing this important reauthorization.

I should note that this legislation passed the Senate in March of this year by a vote of 96 to 2, and after a few changes by the House, it passed that Chamber by acclamation in September. I believe we had the cloture vote last week, and even then I think there was only one vote against it.

I encourage every Member of the Senate to vote in favor of final passage and finally get this bill to the President's desk.

I wish to especially thank Senators MIKULSKI and BURR—two members of our committee and the original sponsors of this legislation—for their persistence and commitment in getting this bill done.

I would also like to thank many of the staff for their years of work on this legislation.

I would like to thank Brent Palmer and Jessica McNiece of Senator MIKULSKI's staff; David Cleary, Peter Oppenheim, and Patrick Murray of Senator ALEXANDER's staff; Chris Toppings and Celia Simms of Senator BURR's staff.

I would like to thank current and past members of my staff: Pam Smith, Derek Miller, Mildred Otero, and Mario Cardona. Of course, I also wish to thank our HELP Committee's ranking member Senator ALEXANDER for his key role in reauthorizing this vital program. And my debt of gratitude to Senator ALEXANDER extends far beyond this particular bill.

This will likely be the last bill originating in the HELP Committee to see floor time in this Congress, and thus, this is the last bill that will come to the Senate floor out of the committee I so proudly chair.

I wish to take this opportunity to express not only my gratitude to Senator ALEXANDER but my respect and admiration for the senior Senator from Tennessee. In the new Congress in January, Senator ALEXANDER will assume

the chairmanship of this HELP Committee, and I know this important committee will be in very able hands.

Throughout my 30 years in the Senate, I have been blessed to share many excellent working relationships with Republican colleagues, both when I served as chair or ranking member on various committees. Senator Arlen Specter was my partner for many years on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies. In fact, from 1989 until the day he left the Senate, Senator Specter and I were either chair or ranking member of that important Appropriations subcommittee.

I had great relationships on the agriculture committee with Senator Dick Lugar, Senator THAD COCHRAN, and Senator SAXBY CHAMBLISS. Since 2009, as chair of the HELP Committee, I have enjoyed very productive relationships, first with Senator MIKE ENZI, who had been both the chair and then ranking member of that committee, and more recently with Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER, with whom I have worked on CCDBG—the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program that we are now authorizing.

In fact, I am proud to note that when this bill is signed into law by the President, this will be the 21st HELP Committee bill enacted into law in this Congress. In a Congress that has been criticized, rightfully or wrongfully, for its lack of productivity, Senator ALEXANDER and I have forged a partnership that has enabled us to chart a different course—a course of bipartisan productiveness. To cite several examples, we worked together to pass major legislation to revamp and modernize America's job training system, overhaul and improve America's food safety system, improve drug safety and speed the approval of potentially lifesaving drugs—so 21 bills.

Someone said that our committee really represents probably one of the widest spectrums ideologically in the Senate—both from very conservative to very progressive on our committee. Yet we forged these relationships to get things done. Now, just because these relationships have helped us to get these bills through, it doesn't mean that we always agreed on everything.

The fact is our disagreements have been oftentimes and vigorous. After all, I am a proud progressive and Senator ALEXANDER is a proud conservative, but our disagreements have never been personal and they were never the last word. We have consistently sought areas of agreement, and more often than not, we found them. As a result, we have forged a remarkable record of accomplishment in the HELP Committee with 21 bills in 2 years signed into law.

More importantly, we have accomplished big things for the American people. Thanks to legislation passed by our committee, lives will be improved and lives will be saved. Drugs will be approved faster and they will be safer. Workers will have access to quality job training and retraining opportunities, including young people with disabilities who will now have provisions to support them in school to get them ready for competitive, integrated employment or for higher education or for technical education, which they have not really had before. That is one big part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that we passed that not too many people know about. So from now on, kids in school who have an IEP—an Individualized Education Program—will now have internships, summer jobs, and job coaching that will, again, raise their expectations and hope of what they can do. They will be able to visit colleges and have college internships or college support systems, which they have never had before, to enable them to seek a higher education or perhaps to go to community colleges. Those are a few of the things we have done on our committee. Soon, with this bill, babies and kids across the country will have better access to safe, high quality, and affordable care.

It has been with great pride that I have been chair of this HELP Committee. I still think it is the best committee in the Congress. I remember once Dan Inouye—Senator Inouye—said that I chaired the committee that helped define America. He chaired the committee that defended America, but I chaired the committee that defined America. I would like to think of the HELP Committee as doing that—an America where every kid has the possibility of going up that ladder or ramp of opportunity no matter the circumstances of his or her birth, where health care is a right and not a privilege, where everyone will have affordable health care coverage.

This committee has even helped those who have fallen off of that ladder of opportunity because of an illness or injury to get back on it with job retraining and support services. This committee has ensured that every person with a disability—either through an accident or through birth or illness—can have a full and meaningful and productive life. Our elderly know they are going to have the kind of support systems that will enable them to also be productive in their retirement years—in their golden years, as they say.

The Labor, Education, Health, and Pensions Committee covers a broad array of how we define America as a caring, compassionate, and productive society. It has been a challenge, but it has also been a great honor and privilege to chair this committee.

As I leave, I can say we are fortunate to have someone of Senator ALEXANDER's depth and breadth of experience. In fact, he has been the Secretary of Education, Governor of Tennessee, and President of the University of Tennessee. He is well qualified, and I know he will do a great job in leading this committee in the future.

I wish to thank all of my committee members, but especially Senator LAMAR ALEXANDER from Tennessee, and let him know on the record how much I valued our collaboration and how much I benefited from his counsel and his wisdom.

I urge all Senators to support this new reauthorization—the first time since 1996—of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Program.

With that, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I see my distinguished friend the Senator from Iowa on the floor. I am here, very simply, to say that we are about to vote on the Child Care and Development Block Grant, a piece of legislation that would provide childcare to 1.5 million children so that their mothers can work or continue their education or training.

I have repeated on this floor several times the story of a young woman in Memphis, TN, who attended LeMoyne-Owen College and received about $500 a month to pay for childcare for her child so she could get her degree. She then graduated from LeMoyne-Owen with a business degree and was able to work her way up to the position of assistant manager at a local Walmart. The block grant helped her be able to continue her education and obtain a good job so that she can now pay for the childcare costs of her second child on her own.

This bill has strong support on both sides of the aisle, but we Republicans especially like it because it is a block grant to the States. The grant gives States flexibility with minimal Federal rules. It also encourages the use of vouchers allowing that young mother I just mentioned to choose among her various options for childcare.

It doesn't mandate from Washington, it enables from Washington. It recognizes that leaders in States have very good judgment, and what might work in Hawaii might not in Tennessee or Iowa. Different programs may work better in different jurisdictions, and that mothers themselves ought to be able to make the judgment of where their child receives care.

I wish to thank Senator HARKIN, who is retiring this year, and who is chairman of the committee that has produced this bill. He and Senator MIKULSKI and Senator BURR have worked for years on this piece of legislation. It received a lot of consideration in the Senate and in the House. We all would like to see the Senate function better, and it did function better for this bill. When we first brought this to the Senate floor in March, the majority leader

didn't fill the tree or file cloture. We considered 50 amendments and adopted 18 of them. Fourteen of them we agreed to adopt by voice vote, four of them received roll call votes, and then we passed the bill 96 to 2. The House made a few minor changes in it. They did it while consulting with Senator HARKIN and me and others who did work on the bill, and we have come to this point today.

This is a very important piece of legislation, helping 900,000 families, 1.5 million children across the country. In Tennessee alone, 21,000 families will be helped by this. In our society today, worksite daycare is not available to every single mother or father who has a child, and this helps with that.

I thank the Senate for its consideration of this very important bill. I thank the House for working with the Senate and I congratulate Senator HARKIN. I imagine he has mentioned it, but if he hasn't, this will be the 21st piece of legislation the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee has produced this year that will become law under his leadership. As Senator HARKIN goes back to Des Moines, IA, and rocks on his front porch and pursues the next chapter of his life, he can say that in the Senate, which didn't always work that well in this Congress, his committee did, and it has benefited lots of families and lots of children.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes on the bill, and I am glad to see it as a good example of what I hope to see more of as we move into the new year.

Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

RECOGNIZING HOMELESS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I come to the floor today to speak about the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act. I'm glad to say that the bill before us today contains a number of provisions intended to facilitate homeless families' access to quality child care. I appreciate the work of my colleagues, particularly Chairman HARKIN, Senator MIKULSKI and Ranking Member MILLER, in supporting these important new provisions.

Unfortunately, young children who are homeless are more likely to have developmental delays, and more health and mental health problems, than low-income housed children. At the same time, their mothers are less likely to receive childcare subsidies than are poor mothers at-risk of homelessness. So I believe that this legislation will be important in helping rectify this inequity.

However, I want to ensure there is a common understanding of who we intend to include within the definition of homeless families or homeless children. The most common Federal definition of homelessness is found in the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, at 42 U.S.C. §11434A. That definition applies to public schools, including local educational agency preschool programs, and is used in the Head Start Act, Higher Education Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, among others. The definition includes children and youth who are staying in motels, or with others temporarily because they have nowhere else to go. Eighty percent of the homeless children and youth enrolled in public schools last year were staying in these situations when they were first identified.

Is it the chairman's intention that the definition of homeless to be applied to the provisions of this bill be the definition from subtitle VII–B of the McKinney-Vento Act, the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program?

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, I thank the Senator for her important question. Her understanding is correct. The definition of homeless children and youth found at 42 U.S.C. §11434A is the definition we intend to apply to homeless children and families where those terms are used in this bill.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I thank the Senator for that clarification, which will assist States in implementing the provisions of this bill by aligning definitions across Federal programs serving homeless families.

This bill overlaps with the McKinney-Vento Act in another way which I would like to clarify. This bill requires State plans to describe how the State will coordinate childcare services with programs for children in preschool programs and other early childhood programs serving homeless children and children in foster care, in order to expand accessibility and continuity of care and assist children enrolled in early childhood programs to receive full-day services.

The McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program is the only education program specifically designed to promote academic success for homeless students. The McKinney-Vento Act requires every local educational agency to designate a homeless education liaison, whose job includes identifying homeless children and youth and ensuring homeless children and families receive educational services for they are eligible, including Head Start and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency. In order for States to expand accessibility and continuity of care for homeless children, it is critically important that McKinney-Vento liaisons are among the professionals with whom States and child care providers coordinate.

Is it Senator MIKULSKI's understanding and intention that McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons be included among those programs for children in preschool programs and other early childhood programs serving homeless children with which States should coordinate child care services?

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, I thank the Senator for raising the issue of local educational agency McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons. Given their central role and responsibility in identifying homeless children and ensuring they receive education and early childhood education services for which they are eligible, liaisons are important partners in coordinating childcare services. The Senate-passed version of this legislation had called for coordination with McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons. It is indeed our intention that State plans include a description of how the State will coordinate childcare services with McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I thank the Senator for clarifying the bill's intent that McKinney-Vento liaisons be part of States' coordination of childcare services.

I would also like to clarify the intent behind two related bill provisions. First, this bill requires State plans to include a certification that there are in effect in the State requirements applicable to childcare providers which are designed to protect children's health and safety, including the establishment of a grace period that allows homeless children and children in foster care to receive services while their families are taking any necessary actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements. This provision is similar to language found in the McKinney-Vento Act and the Head Start Act. It recognizes that families experiencing homelessness have particular challenges in producing health records and other documents, due largely to their poverty and unstable living situations.

At the same time, the bill requires States to use funds for activities that improve access to childcare services, including the use of procedures to permit enrollment—after an initial eligibility determination—of homeless children while required documentation is obtained. I would ask the chairman, is it the intent of the bill language that regardless of the procedures States use to permit enrollment while required documentation is obtained, States still must establish a grace period that allows homeless children to receive services while their families are taking any necessary actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements?

Mr. HARKIN. Madam President, again, I thank the Senator for this clarifying question. Under this bill, State plans must include a certification that there are in effect in the State requirements that include the establishment of a grace period that allows homeless children to receive services while their families are taking any necessary actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements. That requirement stands apart from procedures the State uses to permit enrollment of homeless children while other required documentation is obtained.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, Thank you for that explanation. I am pleased to hear that homeless children will be able to receive services while their families are taking actions to comply with immunization and other health and safety requirements.

Regarding enrollment while other required documentation is obtained, the bill language requires that States use procedures to ensure such enrollment occurs after an initial eligibility determination is made. Yet, eligibility documentation is among the required documentation homeless families must produce. However, we know that homeless families struggle to produce documents, due to their poverty and mobility. Can Senator MIKULSKI, please clarify the intent of the phrase ''after an initial eligibility determination?''

Ms. MIKULSKI. Madam President, The language calls for procedures to permit enrollment of homeless children, after an initial eligibility determination, while required documentation is obtained. To implement this language and its intent, States will need to implement procedures to make abbreviated initial eligibility determinations of homeless children and enroll them immediately, while required documentation, including some documentation to prove eligibility, is obtained.

For example, a State could adopt a procedure that a child referred by a local educational agency McKinney-Vento homeless liaison would be determined to be initially eligible and enrolled in services immediately, while required documentation is obtained. The family then would have to take necessary steps to provide standard documentation to establish eligibility.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I thank Senator MIKULSKI for that important clarification. The intent of the bill as she describes it will greatly improve homeless children's access to childcare. I appreciate the Senator's dedication to this legislation, which helps expand opportunity for families and enhance the quality of childcare for young people across the country.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I support the Child Care and Development Block Grant, CCDBG, reauthorization bill, S. 1086, which is now pending before the Senate. I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation, which would send it to the President for his signature. I want to congratulate my colleagues, Senator MIKULSKI for her leadership on this bill, and Senator HARKIN, Senator ALEXANDER, and Senator BURR. This reauthorization has truly been a bipartisan effort and illustrative of the Senate HELP Committee's effectiveness this Congress, and I congratulate Senator HARKIN on his leadership of this committee as he retires from Congress next month. Through the HELP Committee's leadership and work with their House counterparts, this legislation will serve to better support working families and children and make a significant improvement to our current childcare programs.

The last time we authorized this program was in 1996. I know that very well because I was serving in the House of Representatives at the time and had the opportunity to be the ranking member on the Human Resources Subcommittee in the House Ways and Means Committee that was considering welfare reform and childcare, and how we could reward families for work, and how our welfare system could become a transitional program rather than a permanent program that would allow people, particularly moms, to be able to get into the workforce, stay in the workforce and climb up the economic ladder.

Today, under CCDBG, there are 1.6 million children eligible for program services. CCDBG provides not only a safe environment for those children, but allows 70 percent of their parents to work and an educational opportunity for the child at the same time. A Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, TANF, study showed that parents who had their children in childcare for 2 years or more were more likely to remain employed. CCDBG provides stable employment, help for the child, and a positive economic situation for the family.

This bi-cameral, bi-partisan CCDBG reauthorization bill before us makes improvements to this successful program, as it should. It allows the States to develop 13 specific health and safety standards, such as first aid and CPR, and SIDS, sudden infant death syndrome. It is keeping our children safer in childcare by having safety standards that are developed. This legislation: requires the States to do annual health, safety, and fire inspections of nearly all childcare providers; expands comprehensive background checks for those who are involved in childcare; steadily increases the annual authorization of appropriations; phases in a doubling of the annual set-aside for quality initiatives to 9 percent by 2019; makes information available online for parents to make informed childcare decisions; promotes more transparency in the program; and provides additional State flexibility on how they can set priorities within the childcare program. This program is a model of how federalism should operate, with the Federal Government and the States collaborating together to improve the quality of life for many middle-class American families.

This legislation will accomplish our objectives so we can get more people into the workforce and provide access to early childhood education to help children succeed in life. This program will allow us to help American families and strengthen the economic security of America.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I suggest the absence fo a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CHILD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT ACT OF 2014

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to concur, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 1086, an act to reauthorize and improve the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Reid motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill.

Reid motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill, with Reid amendment No. 3923 (to the motion to concur in the House amendment), to change the enactment date.

Reid Amendment No. 3924 (to amendment No. 3923), of a perfecting nature.

MOTION TO CONCUR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, all postcloture time is considered expired.

The motion to concur with amendment No. 3923 is withdrawn.

The question is on agreeing to the motion to concur in the House amendment to S. 1086.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. BOXER), the Senator from Washington (Ms. CANTWELL), the Senator from North Carolina (Mrs. HAGAN), the Senator from Washington (Mrs. MURRAY), the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the Senator from New Hampshire (Mrs. SHAHEEN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. CORNYN. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. COBURN), the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN), the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. THUNE).

Further, if present and voting, the Senator from North Dakota (Mr. HOEVEN) would have voted ''aye'' and the Senator from Alaska (Ms. MURKOWSKI) would have voted ''aye.''

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DONNELLY). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?