

This underscores the need for a system that proactively prevents identity theft and provides clear, consistent support for American families.

Mr. Speaker, my bill addresses this by streamlining the process to a single point of contact at the Social Security Administration so that they can get their issues resolved more efficiently. I am proud to offer this bill along with my colleague, Mr. LARSON, and ask that Members support this bill.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me compliment the chairman, Mr. FERGUSON, and thank him for his incredible work in this area. I also thank Commissioner O'Malley, who doesn't get the credit I believe he richly deserves, especially dealing with less resources and a larger and growing problem. Imagine, if you will, for I think most viewers don't know, that 10,000 baby boomers a day become eligible for Social Security, and it is growing rapidly.

I am glad that Republicans support this bill to improve customer service for victims of identity theft, but they must also support giving SSA the resources it needs to implement it. I think that is pretty clear and straightforward.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that, as was pointed out by Mr. SMITH and also by Mr. FERGUSON, the unfortunate experience people go through is a crime, identity theft, and even more of a crime when you can't get service.

Yet, what is really criminal about Social Security is that Congress has not taken on the responsibility of enhancing a program that was last improved when Richard Nixon was President of the United States—53 years. Every single district, every single individual, everyone who is retiring is stuck at the same benefit level they were in 1971.

There are 5 million Americans who get below-poverty-level checks because Congress hasn't acted. For over 40 percent of Social Security recipients, which is 28 million people, all they have is Social Security. The only body that can resolve that problem for them is the United States Congress.

We took a baby step here as it relates to making sure about identity theft. We need to take a major step and vote for enhancements for people who richly deserve them. They are counting on us. It is the Nation's insurance program, and we have not done our job as a Congress.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, a Social Security number is the gateway to taking control of an American's identity and finances. Congress owes it to the American people to do everything that we can to ensure their identities are protected and that the process for taking back control of their identity when their Social

Security number is compromised is streamlined and easy. We especially owe it to the almost 1 million children who were victims of identity fraud in 2022 through no fault of their own.

H.R. 3784 is a long-overdue step forward in streamlining the Social Security Administration's process and alleviating the burden on victims.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3784, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

### FIND AND PROTECT FOSTER YOUTH ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (S. 1146) to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to identify obstacles to identifying and responding to reports of children missing from foster care and other vulnerable foster youth, to provide technical assistance relating to the removal of such obstacles, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

S. 1146

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Find and Protect Foster Youth Act".

#### SEC. 2. ELIMINATING OBSTACLES TO IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF CHILDREN MISSING FROM FOSTER CARE AND OTHER VULNERABLE FOSTER YOUTH.

Section 476 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 676) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(f) EVALUATION OF PROTOCOLS RELATING TO CHILDREN MISSING FROM FOSTER CARE AND OTHER VULNERABLE YOUTH; TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—

"(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct an evaluation of the protocols established by States in accordance with the requirements of section 471(a)(35) and, to the extent applicable, by Indian tribes or tribal organizations (as defined in section 479B(a)) or tribal consortia with a plan approved under section 471 in accordance with section 479B.

"(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The evaluation shall include the following:

"(A) A review of relevant aspects of reports submitted by States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia under this part and part B, and data and other information reported pursuant to the system established under section 479.

"(B) Analysis of the extent to which States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia comply with, and enforce, the protocols required by section 471(a)(35).

"(C) Analysis of the effectiveness of such protocols.

"(D) Identification of obstacles for States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia to identifying and responding to reports of children missing from foster care and other vulnerable foster youth.

"(E) Identification of best practices for identifying such children and youth and intervening with effective services.

"(3) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia with information, advice, educational materials, and technical assistance relating to eliminating identified obstacles to identifying and responding to reports of children missing from foster care and other vulnerable foster youth and providing such children and youth with effective services. Such assistance may include dissemination of—

"(A) processes and tools to identify and examine risk factors and potential trends related to children who go missing from foster care and other vulnerable youth;

"(B) best practices for runaway tracking and recovery; and

"(C) guidelines for intervention, including with respect to services, types of providers, and placement settings.

"(4) REPORT.—Not later than 5 years after the date of enactment of this subsection, the Secretary shall submit a report to Congress on the results of the evaluation conducted under this subsection and the technical assistance provided in accordance with paragraph (3)."

#### SEC. 3. IMPROVING SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN RETURNED TO FOSTER CARE AFTER GOING MISSING TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY WERE, OR ARE AT RISK OF BECOMING, VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING.

Section 476 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 676), as amended by section 2, is further amended by adding at the end the following:

"(g) IMPROVING IDENTIFICATION OF, AND SERVICES FOR, CHILDREN WHO RETURN TO FOSTER CARE AFTER RUNNING AWAY OR OTHERWISE BEING ABSENT FROM FOSTER CARE AND WHO ARE, OR ARE AT RISK OF BEING, VICTIMS OF SEX TRAFFICKING.—

"(1) ASSISTANCE.—

"(A) SCREENING AFTER A RETURN TO FOSTER CARE.—The Secretary shall provide States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia, with information, advice, educational materials, and technical assistance to improve compliance with section 471(a)(35)(A)(iii).

"(B) IMPROVING OTHER REQUIREMENTS.—The information, advice, educational materials, and technical assistance provided may include information, advice, educational materials, and technical assistance to improve or modify policies and procedures (including relevant training for caseworkers) developed by States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia under section 471(a)(9)(C), including the following:

"(i) Identifying, through screening, whether the State has reasonable cause to believe the child or youth is, or is at risk of being, a victim of sex trafficking.

"(ii) Documenting the results of such screening in agency records.

"(iii) Determining appropriate services for a child or youth for whom the State determines there is reasonable cause to identify the child or youth as a victim of sex trafficking, or as at risk of being a victim of sex trafficking.

"(iv) Documenting in agency records the determination of appropriate services for a child or youth described in clause (iii).

"(2) FORMS OF ASSISTANCE.—The assistance provided under this subsection shall include the following:

“(A) Assisting States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia, with developing oversight mechanisms to assess their compliance with section 471(a)(35)(A)(iii).

“(B) Assisting States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia in developing—

“(i) assessments for screening children who return to foster care after running away or otherwise being absent from foster care for risk of becoming victims of sex trafficking; and

“(ii) effective and robust policies relating to the use of the assessments.

“(C) Working with States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia to improve or modify policies and procedures developed under section 471(a)(9)(C).

“(D) Providing technical assistance on how States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia may best use data collected pursuant to section 479 for oversight of, and to ensure compliance with, the requirements of paragraphs (9)(C) and (35)(A)(iii) of section 471(a).

“(3) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall, to the extent practicable, consult with internal and external offices with expertise on sex trafficking, including the Office on Trafficking in Persons of the Administration for Children and Families, on the development and dissemination to States, Indian tribes, tribal organizations, and tribal consortia of the assistance required under this subsection.”.

#### SEC. 4. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary such sums as are necessary to carry out this Act for fiscal year 2024 through fiscal year 2027.

#### SEC. 5. IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING CONDITIONS THAT LEAD TO YOUTH RUNNING AWAY FROM FOSTER CARE.

The Comptroller General of the United States shall submit to the Congress a written report that—

(1) contains a rigorous analysis of administrative data to determine the characteristics of youth who run away from foster care and other relevant information about foster care runaway episodes;

(2) includes information from interviews with recent foster youth runaways regarding their reasons for running away and what happened after they ran away, including any screening or other protocol followed by the State;

(3) includes a systematic review of research and evidence related to foster youth runaways;

(4) sets forth best practices for making foster care safe for youth and reducing the number of foster youth runaways; and

(5) makes recommendations to advance child welfare practices, after convening and consulting with a group of child welfare practitioners and professionals to inform the recommendations.

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

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Missouri.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

Mr. Speaker, every year, thousands of families open their hearts and welcome into their homes children who have suffered abuse, neglect, and abandonment. Right now, there are nearly 400,000 children in foster care.

Youth in the foster care system often have experienced serious trauma and are at high risk of going missing or running away from their foster care placements, which increases their likelihood of experiencing homelessness, human trafficking, and other exploitation.

Over the past year, the Committee on Ways and Means has been hard at work reforming aspects of our child welfare programs. The Find and Protect Foster Youth Act, introduced by Senator JOHN CORNYN and Representative TONY GONZALES, will bring us one step closer to realizing that goal.

This legislation requires the Department of Health and Human Services and States to improve tracking for children in the foster care system who have run away or gone missing at some point, including screening youth for signs of human trafficking or other trauma.

Under Federal law, States are required to report missing foster children within 24 hours to law enforcement, yet some States still struggle to implement those protocols. This means that in some cases, kids missing from foster care are not being tracked or reported as missing in a timely manner.

This legislation also requires HHS to evaluate State protocols for shortcomings and share that information with Congress so we can implement the changes to better track and protect youth in our foster care system.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of S. 1146, the Find and Protect Foster Youth Act, as amended.

This bill builds on existing HHS guidance to ensure that States understand their grave responsibilities when youth go missing from foster care. It would require HHS to determine whether States are in full compliance with the law and guidance and also to identify best practices and provide technical support to States so that they can do better by our youth.

Our committee worked closely with HHS to update the original guidance and then advanced, last year, the bipartisan House companion bill, H.R. 2426.

Taking a child into foster care is a last resort, something that we should do only if a child cannot live safely at home even with services or support. Once a State takes custody of a child, they must keep that child safe and act

in the child's best interest. There is no higher obligation than keeping a child safe in our care.

We know that children who run away from foster care are not safe. They are disproportionately likely to be homeless or to fall prey to sex traffickers and other predators. They often struggle with mental health challenges or substance abuse.

To our shame, many youth who run away from foster care also were not safe before they ran away. They ran away because they were placed in an unsafe home or separated from siblings and other family members.

This amended version of S. 1146 addresses that issue by requiring HHS to study and learn more about how to prevent the situation that causes youth to flee.

In crafting this bipartisan additional study requirement, I was fortunate to consult Bryan Samuels and the able team at Chapin Hall in my city of Chicago. Their deep expertise and prior work on this topic informed our thinking.

I take great pride in our committee's bipartisan work to strengthen families and protect vulnerable foster youth over the years, including the landmark Family First Prevention Services Act and the strong bill to reauthorize and invest in child welfare services that we are also considering today.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all Members to support the Find and Protect Foster Youth Act and continue to work together to advance thoughtful legislation to help our most vulnerable youth and families.

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

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as she might consume to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. BROWN).

□ 1545

Ms. BROWN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Find and Protect Foster Youth Act.

Every day 55 foster youth in the United States go missing. Their average age is 15. Missing means we don't know where they are or if they are safe, and all too often they are not safe.

Right now, the system is failing foster youth. So often, people say: They fell through the cracks. It is our job to find where those cracks are and to fill them.

That is what this bill does. It requires the Federal Government to coordinate with States to find the gaps and fill them so that we can keep foster youth safe.

Mr. Speaker, 55 new foster youth missing each day is 55 too many, and I urge my colleagues to pass this bill for foster youth in Ohio and across the country.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

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

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I thank Chairman SMITH and Chairman LAHOOD for their work and their assistance in moving this bill that would require HHS to determine whether States are in full compliance with the law when youth go missing from foster care, and also to identify best practices and provide technical support to States so that they can better serve these young people in our care and need our help.

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

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, our foster care system is a lifeline for thousands of children who have been displaced, abused, and neglected. Many of these children are at risk for going missing or running away from their foster homes, which puts them at risk of experiencing homelessness and human trafficking.

As Members of Congress, our responsibility to protect foster youth doesn't end once they are placed in a home. We must ensure that States have the tools and guidance to locate these children when they go missing in a timely manner and work to make sure every child has a safe and loving home.

This legislation will strengthen communication between States and the Federal Government to help them find and protect missing foster youth who are in crisis.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, S. 1146, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

## SUPPORTING AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 9076) to reauthorize and modernize part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to strengthen child welfare services, expand the availability of prevention services to better meet the needs of vulnerable families, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 9076

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Supporting America’s Children and Families Act”.

## TITLE I—CHILD WELFARE REAUTHORIZATION AND MODERNIZATION

### SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE; REFERENCES.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This title may be cited as the “Protecting America’s Children by Strengthening Families Act”.

(b) REFERENCES.—Except as otherwise expressly provided, wherever in this title an amendment or repeal is expressed in terms of an amendment to, or repeal of, a section or other provision, the reference shall be considered to be made to that section or other provision of the Social Security Act.

### SEC. 102. TABLE OF CONTENTS.

The table of contents of this title is as follows:

- Sec. 101. Short title; references.
- Sec. 102. Table of contents.
- Sec. 103. Reauthorization of child welfare programs.
- Sec. 104. Enhancements to the court improvement program.
- Sec. 105. Expanding regional partnership grants to address parental substance use disorder as cause of child removal.
- Sec. 106. Modernization; reducing administrative burden.
- Sec. 107. Streamlining funding for Indian tribes.
- Sec. 108. Accelerating access to Family First prevention services.
- Sec. 109. Strengthening support for youth aging out of foster care.
- Sec. 110. Recognizing the importance of relative and kinship caregivers.
- Sec. 111. Avoiding neglect by addressing poverty.
- Sec. 112. Strengthening support for caseworkers.
- Sec. 113. Demonstration projects for improving relationships between incarcerated parents and children in foster care.
- Sec. 114. Guidance to States on improving data collection and reporting for youth in residential treatment programs.
- Sec. 115. Streamlining research, training, and technical assistance funding.
- Sec. 116. Report on post adoption and subsidized guardianship services.
- Sec. 117. Effective date.

### SEC. 103. REAUTHORIZATION OF CHILD WELFARE PROGRAMS.

(a) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 1; DISCRETIONARY FUNDING.—Section 425 (42 U.S.C. 625) is amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through 2029”.

(b) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; ENHANCED SUPPORT.—Section 436(a) (42 U.S.C. 629f(a)) is amended by striking “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting “fiscal year 2025 and \$420,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029”.

(c) REAUTHORIZATION OF SUBPART 2; DISCRETIONARY FUNDING.—Section 437(a) (42 U.S.C. 629g(a)) is amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through 2029”.

(d) FUNDING LIMITATION.—Section 423(a)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C. 623(a)(2)(A)) is amended by inserting “, not to exceed \$10,000,000” before the semicolon.

### SEC. 104. ENHANCEMENTS TO THE COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.

(a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section 436(b)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(2)) is amended by inserting “for fiscal year 2025 and \$40,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and each succeeding fiscal year” before “for grants”.

(b) EXTENSION OF STATE MATCH REQUIREMENT.—Section 438(d) (42 U.S.C. 629h(d)) is amended by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through 2029”.

(c) PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS.—Section 438(a) (42 U.S.C. 629h(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by adding at the end the following:

“(F) that determine the appropriateness and best practices for use of technology to conduct remote hearings, subject to participant consent, including to ensure maximum participation of individuals involved in proceedings and to enable courts to maintain operations in times of public health or other emergencies;”;

(2) in paragraph (2)(C), by striking “personnel.” and inserting “personnel and supporting optimal use of remote hearing technology; and”;

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(3) to ensure continuity of needed court services, prevent disruption of the services, and enable their recovery from threats such as public health crises, natural disasters or cyberattacks, including through—

“(A) support for technology that allows court proceedings to occur remotely subject to participant consent, including hearings and legal representation;

“(B) the development of guidance and protocols for responding to the occurrences and coordinating with other agencies; and

“(C) other activities carried out to ensure backup systems are in place.”.

(d) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE ON SHARING BEST PRACTICES FOR TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES NEEDED FOR REMOTE COURT PROCEEDINGS FOR FOSTER CARE OR ADOPTION.—Section 438 (42 U.S.C. 629h) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(e) GUIDANCE.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—Every 5 years, the Secretary shall issue implementation guidance for sharing information on best practices for—

“(A) technological changes needed for court proceedings for foster care, guardianship, or adoption to be conducted remotely in a way that maximizes engagement and protects the privacy of participants; and

“(B) the manner in which the proceedings should be conducted.

“(2) INITIAL ISSUANCE.—The Secretary shall issue initial guidance required by paragraph (1) with preliminary information on best practices not later than October 1, 2025.

“(3) ADDITIONAL CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall consult with Indian tribes on the development of appropriate guidelines for State court proceedings involving Indian children to maximize engagement of Indian tribes and provide appropriate guidelines on conducting State court proceedings subject to the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (25 U.S.C. 1901 et seq.).”.

### SEC. 105. EXPANDING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANTS TO ADDRESS PARENTAL SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER AS CAUSE OF CHILD REMOVAL.

(a) INCREASE IN RESERVATION OF FUNDS.—Section 436(b)(5) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(5)) is amended by striking “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting “fiscal year 2025 and \$30,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and each succeeding fiscal year”.

(b) REAUTHORIZATION.—Section 437(f) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (3)(A)—

(A) by striking “In addition to amounts authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section, the” and inserting “The”; and

(B) by striking “2017 through 2023” and inserting “2025 through 2029”; and

(2) in paragraph (10), by striking “for each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023”.

(c) AUTHORITY TO WAIVE PLANNING PHASE.—Section 437(f)(3)(B)(iii) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(3)(B)(iii)) is amended—

(1) by striking all that precedes “grant awarded” and inserting the following:

“(iii) SUFFICIENT PLANNING.—

“(I) IN GENERAL.—A”; and

(2) by striking “may not exceed \$250,000, and”; and