

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

(3) by adding after and below the end the following:

“(II) EXCEPTION.—The Secretary, on a case-by-case basis, may waive the planning phase for a partnership that demonstrates that the partnership has engaged in sufficient planning before submitting an application for a grant under this subsection.”

(d) EXPANDING AVAILABILITY OF EVIDENCE-BASED SERVICES.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 437(f)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(1)) is amended by inserting “, and expand the scope of the evidence-based services that may be approved by the clearinghouse established under section 476(d)” before the period.

(2) CONSIDERATIONS FOR AWARDED GRANTS.—Section 437(f)(7) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(7)) is amended—

(A) by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (D);

(B) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (E) and inserting “; and”; and

(C) by adding at the end the following:

“(F) have submitted information pursuant to paragraph (4)(F) that demonstrates the capability to participate in rigorous evaluation of program effectiveness.”

(e) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ON USING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP GRANT FUNDS IN COORDINATION WITH OTHER FEDERAL FUNDS TO BETTER SERVE FAMILIES AFFECTED BY A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER.—Section 435(d) (42 U.S.C. 629e(d)) is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of paragraph (4);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (5) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(6) use grants under section 437(f) in coordination with other Federal funds to better serve families in the child welfare system that are affected by a substance use disorder.”

(f) PERFORMANCE INDICATORS.—Section 437(f)(8)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(8)(A)) is amended in the 1st sentence—

(1) by striking “this subsection” the 1st place it appears and inserting “the Protecting America’s Children by Strengthening Families Act”;

(2) by inserting “child permanency, reunification, re-entry into care,” before “parental recovery”; and

(3) by inserting “, and access to services for families with substance use disorder, including those with children who are over-represented in foster care, difficult to place, or have disproportionately low permanency rates” before the period.

(g) PERFORMANCE INDICATOR CONSULTATION REQUIRED.—Section 437(f)(8)(B) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(8)(B)) is amended by redesignating clause (iii) as clause (iv) and inserting after clause (ii) the following:

“(iii) The Administrator of the National Institute on Drug Abuse.”

(h) REPORTS TO CONGRESS.—Section 437(f)(9)(B) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(9)(B)) is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of clause (ii);

(2) by striking the period at the end of clause (iii) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(iv) whether any programs funded by the grants were submitted to the clearinghouse established under section 476(d) for review and the results of any such review.”

(i) PRIORITY FOR STATEWIDE SERVICE GROWTH.—Section 437(f)(7) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(7)), as amended by subsection (d)(2) of this section, is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (E);

(2) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (F) and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(G) are a State or public agency, or outline a plan to increase the availability of services funded under the grant statewide.”

(j) ADDITION OF JUVENILE COURT AS REQUIRED PARTNER.—Section 437(f)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)(A)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(iii) The most appropriate administrative office of the juvenile court or State court overseeing court proceedings involving families who come to the attention of the court due to child abuse or neglect.”

(k) ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL PARTNER.—Section 437(f)(2)(C) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)(C)) is amended by redesignating clause (ix) as clause (x) and inserting after clause (viii) the following:

“(ix) State or local agencies that administer Federal health care, housing, family support, or other related programs.”

(l) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Section 437(f)(2)(D) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)(D)) is amended—

(A) by adding “and” at the end of clause (i);

(B) by striking “; and” at the end of clause (ii) and inserting a period; and

(C) by striking clause (iii).

(2) Section 437(f)(2) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(2)) is amended by striking subparagraph (B) and redesignating subparagraphs (C) and (D) as subparagraphs (B) and (C), respectively

#### SEC. 106. MODERNIZATION; REDUCING ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431 (42 U.S.C. 629a) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(c) USE OF TECHNOLOGY.—

“(1) USE OF PORTAL.—The services referred to in subsection (a) may include the means of access to and use of an electronic or digital portal to facilitate the provision of community support to care for and meet specific needs of families and children.

“(2) LIMITATION.—Such a portal shall not retain or share personally identifiable information about a beneficiary without consent or for any purpose other than referral.”

(b) ALLOWING SUPPORT FOR FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2)(A), by inserting “, including services provided by family resource centers,” before “designed”; and

(2) by adding at the end the following:

“(10) FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The term ‘family resource center’ means a community or school-based hub of support services for families that—

“(i) utilizes an approach that is multi-generational, strengths-based, and family-centered;

“(ii) reflects, and is responsive to, community needs and interests;

“(iii) provides support at no or low cost for participants; and

“(iv) builds communities of peer support for families, including kinship families, to develop social connections that reduce isolation and stress.

“(B) SPECIAL RULE.—For purposes of this subpart, an expenditure for a service provided by a family resource center may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or more of family support services, family preservation services, family reunification services, or adoption promotion and support services as long as the expenditure is related to serving the children and families in the specified category and consistent with the overall purpose of the category.”

(c) UPDATING STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.—Section 422(b)(1) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) provide that a State agency will administer or supervise the administration of the plan under this subpart;”

(d) ACCESS TO LEGAL REPRESENTATION.—Section 422(b)(4) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(4)) is amended—

(1) by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (A);

(2) by adding “and” at the end of subparagraph (B); and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(C) the steps that the State will take to ensure that, with respect to any judicial proceeding involving a child and in which there is an allegation of child abuse or neglect, including a proceeding on dependency, adoption, guardianship, or termination of parental rights, information about available independent legal representation is provided to—

“(i) the child, as appropriate; and

“(ii) any individual who is a parent or guardian, or has legal custody, of the child;”

(e) SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—Section 422(b)(15)(A) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(15)) is amended—

(1) in the matter preceding clause (i)—

(A) by inserting “and, if applicable, the State agency responsible for mental health services,” before “and in consultation”; and

(B) by inserting “mental health providers,” before “other experts”; and

(2) in clause (ii), by inserting “a list of services provided to support the physical and” before “emotional”; and

(3) in clause (iv), by inserting “and mental health” before “services”; and

(4) in clause (v), by inserting “, informed consent of youth, and compliance with professional practice guidelines” before the semicolon; and

(5) in clause (vi), by inserting “, licensed mental health providers,” before “or other”.

(f) REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Subpart 3 of part B of title IV (42 U.S.C. 629m) is amended by redesignating section 440 as section 443 and inserting before such section the following:

#### “SEC. 441. REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN.

“(a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall reduce the burden of administering this part imposed on the recipients of funds under this part, by—

“(1) reviewing and revising administrative data collection instruments and forms to eliminate duplication and streamline reporting requirements for the recipients while collecting all data required under this part;

“(2) in coordination with activities required under the Paperwork Reduction Act, conducting an analysis of the total number of hours reported by the recipients to comply with paperwork requirements and exploring, in consultation with the recipients, how to reduce the number of hours required for the compliance by at least 15 percent;

“(3) collecting input from the recipients with respect to fiscal and oversight requirements and making changes to ensure consistency with standards and guidelines for other Federal formula grant programs based on the input; and

“(4) respecting the sovereignty of Indian tribes when complying with this subsection.

“(b) LIMITATION ON APPLICABILITY.—Subsection (a) of this section shall not apply to any reporting or data collection otherwise required by law that would affect the ability of the Secretary to monitor and ensure compliance with State plans approved under this part or ensure that funds are expended consistent with this part.

#### “SEC. 442. PUBLIC ACCESS TO STATE PLANS.

“The Secretary shall—

“(1) create a standardized format for State plans required under sections 422 and 432 used to monitor compliance with those sections;

“(2) produce comparisons and analyses of trends in State plans to inform future technical assistance and policy development;

“(3) make the State plans available on a public website; and

“(4) include on the website aggregated national summaries of State submissions as the Secretary deems appropriate.”.

(2) **IMPLEMENTATION.**—Within 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall—

(A) comply with section 441 of the Social Security Act, as added by the amendment made by paragraph (1); and

(B) notify each recipient of funds under part B of title IV of the Social Security Act of any change made by the Secretary pursuant to such section affecting the recipient.

(3) **REPORT.**—Within 3 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services shall submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report describing the efforts of the Secretary to comply with section 441 of the Social Security Act, as added by the amendment made by paragraph (1), including the specific actions to comply with each paragraph of such section.

(g) **PRIMARY PREVENTION PARTNERS.**—Section 435(a)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 429e(a)(2)(B)) is amended by inserting “including community-based partners with expertise in preventing unnecessary child welfare system involvement” before the semicolon.

#### **SEC. 107. STREAMLINING FUNDING FOR INDIAN TRIBES.**

(a) **SUBPART 1.**—

(1) **TRIBAL SET-ASIDE; DIRECT PAYMENTS TO TRIBES; EXEMPTIVE AUTHORITY.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 428 (42 U.S.C. 628) is amended by striking subsections (a) and (b) and inserting the following:

“(a) **RESERVATION OF FUNDS; DIRECT PAYMENTS.**—Out of any amount appropriated pursuant to section 425 for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall reserve 3 percent for grants to Indian tribes and tribal organizations, which shall be paid directly to Indian tribes and tribal organizations with a plan approved under this subpart, in accordance with section 433(a).”.

(B) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 423(a) (42 U.S.C. 623(a)) is amended by striking “the sum appropriated pursuant to section 425 for each fiscal year” and inserting “for each fiscal year, the sum appropriated pursuant to section 425 remaining after applying section 428(a)”.

(C) **TECHNICAL AMENDMENT.**—Section 428(c) (42 U.S.C. 628(c)) is amended by striking “450b” and inserting “5304”.

(2) **IMPROVING COMPLIANCE WITH THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT.**—

(A) **STATE PLAN REQUIREMENT.**—Section 422(b)(9) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(9)) is amended by striking “Act,” and inserting “Act of 1978, including how the State will ensure timely notice to Indian tribes of State custody proceedings involving Indian children, foster care or adoptive placements of Indian children, and case recordkeeping as such matters relate to transfers of jurisdiction, termination of parental rights, and active efforts;”.

(B) **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**—Subpart 1 of part B of title IV (42 U.S.C. 621 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

#### **“SEC. 429B. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT OF 1978.**

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Not later than October 1, 2025, the Secretary, in consultation with Indian tribal organizations and States, shall develop a plan and provide technical assistance supporting effective implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, includ-

ing specific measures identified in State plans as required by section 422(b)(9) of this Act. The technical assistance plan shall be based on data sufficient to assess State strengths and areas for improvement in implementing Federal standards established under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, including, at a minimum, the following:

“(1) Timely identification of Indian children and extended family members.

“(2) Timely tribal notice of State child custody proceedings involving an Indian child.

“(3) Reports of cases in which a transfer of jurisdiction (as defined under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978) was granted or was not granted, and reasons specified for denial in cases where transfer was denied.

“(4) In cases in which a State court orders a foster care placement of an Indian child, whether requirements for active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family, testimony of a qualified expert witness, and evidentiary standards were met.

“(5) Whether an Indian child was placed in a placement that is required to be preferred under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, and if not, the reasons specified.

“(6) In cases in which a State court orders the termination of parental rights to an Indian child, whether requirements for active efforts to prevent the breakup of the Indian family, testimony of a qualified expert witness, and evidentiary standards were met.

“(b) **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.**—On request of the Secretary, the Secretary of the Interior shall provide the Secretary with such guidance and assistance as may be necessary to facilitate informing States and public child welfare agencies on how to comply with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, including specific measures identified in State plans as required by section 422(b)(9) of this Act.

“(c) **BIENNIAL REPORTS TO CONGRESS.**—The Secretary shall biennially submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a written report on how—

“(1) the States are complying with the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and section 422(b)(9) of this Act, as informed by data collected under this section; and

“(2) the Secretary is assisting States and Indian tribes to improve implementation of Federal standards established under the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978.”.

(3) **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS; ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 428 (42 U.S.C. 628) is amended by redesignating subsection (c) as subsection (d) and inserting before such subsection the following:

“(b) **AUTHORITY TO STREAMLINE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**—The Secretary shall, in consultation with the affected Indian tribes, modify any reporting requirement imposed by or under this part on an Indian tribe, tribal organization, or tribal consortium if the total of the amounts allotted to the Indian tribe, tribal organization, or tribal consortium under this part for the fiscal year is not more than \$50,000, and in a manner that limits the administrative burden on any tribe to which not more than \$50,000 is allotted under this subpart for the fiscal year.

“(c) **TRIBAL AUTHORITY TO SUBSTITUTE THE FEDERAL NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS CAP.**—For purposes of sections 422(b)(14) and 424(e), an Indian tribal organization may elect to have the weighted average of the indirect cost rates in effect under part 220 of title 2, Code of Federal Regulations with respect to the administrative costs of the Indian tribal organization apply in lieu of the percentage specified in each such section.”.

(B) **CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)) is amended in each of paragraphs (5) and (6) by striking “428(c)” and inserting “428(d)”.

(b) **SUBPART 2.**—

(1) **TRIBAL PLAN EXEMPTION.**—Section 432(b)(2)(B) (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(2)(B)) is amended—

(A) by striking “section 433(a)” the 1st place it appears and inserting “sections 433(a) and 437(c)(1) combined”; and

(B) by striking “section 433(a)” the 2nd place it appears and inserting “such sections”.

(2) **APPLICATION OF TRIBAL SET-ASIDE BEFORE OTHER SET-ASIDES.**—Section 436(b)(3) (42 U.S.C. 429f(b)(3)) is amended by striking “After applying paragraphs (4) and (5) (but before applying paragraphs (1) or (2)), the” and inserting “The”.

(3) **INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR TRIBAL COURT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.**—Section 438(c)(3) (42 U.S.C. 629h(c)(3)) is amended by inserting “for fiscal year 2025, and \$2,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029,” before “for grants”.

#### **SEC. 108. ACCELERATING ACCESS TO FAMILY FIRST PREVENTION SERVICES.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 435 (42 U.S.C. 629e) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(f) **PREVENTION SERVICES EVALUATION PARTNERSHIPS.**—

“(1) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of this subsection is to authorize the Secretary to make competitive grants to support the timely evaluation of—

“(A) services and programs described in section 471(e); or

“(B) kinship navigator programs described in section 474(a)(7).

“(2) **GRANTS.**—In accordance with applications approved under this subsection, the Secretary may make grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to carry out projects designed to evaluate a service or program provided by the eligible entity, or an entity in partnership with the eligible entity, with respect to the requirements for a promising practice, supported practice, or well-supported practice described in section 471(e)(4)(C).

“(3) **APPLICATIONS.**—

“(A) **IN GENERAL.**—An eligible entity may apply to the Secretary for a grant under this subsection to carry out a project that meets the following requirements:

“(i) The project is designed in accordance with paragraph (2).

“(ii) The project is to be carried out by the applicant in partnership with—

“(I) a State agency that administers, or supervises the administration of, the State plan approved under part E, or an agency administering the plan under the supervision of the State agency; and

“(II) if the applicant is unable or unwilling to do so, at least 1 external evaluator to carry out the evaluation of the service or program provided by the applicant.

“(B) **CONTENTS.**—The application shall contain the following:

“(i) A description of the project, including—

“(I) a statement explaining why a grant is necessary to carry out the project; and

“(II) the amount of grant funds that would be disbursed to each entity described in subparagraph (A)(i) in partnership with the applicant.

“(ii) A certification from each entity described in subparagraph (A)(i) that provides assurances that the individual or entity is in partnership with the applicant and will fulfill the responsibilities of the entity specified in the description provided pursuant to clause (i) of this subparagraph.

“(iii) A certification from the applicant that provides assurances that the applicant intends to comply with subparagraph (A)(ii)(II), if applicable.

“(iv) At the option of the eligible entity, a certification from the applicant that the applicant requires an external evaluator secured by the Secretary pursuant to paragraph (5), if applicable.

“(4) PRIORITIES.—In approving applications under this subsection, the Secretary shall prioritize the following:

“(A) Addressing, with respect to the clearinghouse of practices described in section 476(d)(2), deficiencies or gaps identified by the Secretary in consultation with—

“(i) States, political subdivisions of a State, and tribal communities carrying out, or receiving the benefits of, a service or program; and

“(ii) child welfare experts, including individuals with lived experience.

“(B) Maximizing the number of evidence-based services or programs to be included in the clearinghouse of practices described in section 476(d)(2).

“(C) Timely completion of evaluations and the production of evidence.

“(D) Supporting services or programs that are based on, or are adaptations to new population settings of, a service or program with reliable evidence about the benefits and risks of the service or program.

“(5) AVAILABILITY OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—Before accepting applications under this subsection, the Secretary shall make reasonable efforts to identify at least 1 entity to serve as an external evaluator for any eligible entity that includes a certification under paragraph (3)(B)(iv) with an application under this subsection.

“(B) NO EFFECT ON CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATION.—The Secretary may not consider whether an eligible entity is in partnership with an external evaluator described in paragraph (A) in approving an application under this subsection submitted by the eligible entity.

“(6) REPORTS.—

“(A) BY GRANT RECIPIENTS.—Within 1 year after receiving a grant under this subsection, and every year thereafter for the next 5 years, the grant recipient shall submit to the Secretary a written report on—

“(i) the use of grant funds;

“(ii) whether the program or service evaluated by the project meets a requirement specified in section 471(e)(4)(C), including information about—

“(I) how the program or service is being carried out in accordance with standards specified in the requirement;

“(II) any outcomes of the program or service; and

“(III) any outcome with respect to which the service or program compares favorably to a comparison practice; and

“(iii) whether the Secretary has included the program or service in an update to the clearinghouse of practices described in section 476(d)(2).

“(B) BY THE SECRETARY.—The Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and to the Committee on Finance of the Senate an annual written report on—

“(i) the grants awarded under this subsection;

“(ii) the programs funded by the grants;

“(iii) any technical assistance provided by the Secretary in carrying out this subsection, including with respect to the efforts to secure external evaluators pursuant to paragraph (5); and

“(iv) any efforts by the Secretary to support program evaluation and review pursuant to section 471(e) and inclusion of pro-

grams in the pre-approved list of services and programs described in section 471(e)(4)(D) or the clearinghouse of practices described in section 476(d)(2).

“(7) FUNDING.—

“(A) LIMITATIONS.—Of the amounts available to carry out this subsection, the Secretary may use not more than 5 percent to provide technical assistance.

“(B) CARRYOVER.—Amounts made available to carry out this subsection shall remain available until expended.

“(8) DEFINITIONS.—In this subsection:

“(A) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means any of the following providing a service or program or, in the sole determination of the Secretary, able to provide a service or program if awarded a grant under this subsection:

“(i) A State, a political subdivision of a State, or an agency or department of a State or political subdivision of a State.

“(ii) An entity described in subparagraph (A) or (B) of section 426(a)(1).

“(iii) An Indian tribe or tribal organization.

“(B) EXTERNAL EVALUATOR.—The term ‘external evaluator’ means an entity with the ability and willingness to evaluate a service or program pursuant to paragraph (2) that is not provided by the entity.

“(C) SERVICE OR PROGRAM.—The term ‘service or program’—

“(i) means a service or program described in section 471(e); and

“(ii) includes a kinship navigator program described in section 474(a)(7).”

(b) FUNDING.—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(5) PREVENTIVE SERVICES EVALUATION PARTNERSHIPS.—The Secretary shall reserve \$5,000,000 for grants under section 435(f) for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”

#### SEC. 109. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE.

(a) CASEWORKER VISITS.—Section 422(b)(17) (42 U.S.C. 622(b)(17)) is amended by inserting “, and include a description of how the State may offer virtual caseworker visits to youth in care who have attained the age of 18 years and provided informed consent for virtual visits” before the semicolon.

(b) YOUTH AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN CHILD WELFARE PROGRAM PLANNING.—Section 432(b)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629b(b)(1)) is amended to read as follows:

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall approve a plan that meets the requirements of subsection (a) only if—

“(A) the plan was developed jointly by the Secretary and the State, and the State, in developing the plan, consulted with—

“(i) appropriate public and nonprofit private agencies;

“(ii) community-based organizations involved in providing services for children and families in the areas of family preservation, family support, family reunification, foster care, kinship, and adoption promotion and support;

“(iii) parents with child welfare experience, foster parents, adoptive parents, and kinship caregivers; and

“(iv) children, youth, and young adults with experience in the child welfare system, including State boards and councils comprised of youth with lived experience who represent the diversity of children in the State to whom the plan would apply; and

“(B) the State has made publicly accessible on a website of the State agency a report that outlines how the State has implemented the suggestions of the children and youth referred to in subparagraph (A)(iv).”

#### SEC. 110. RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIVE AND KINSHIP CAREGIVERS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)), as amended by section 106(b)(2) of this Act, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1)—

(A) in the matter preceding subparagraph (A)—

(i) by striking “children” and inserting “children, youth.”; and

(ii) by striking “adoptive and extended” and inserting “kinship and adoptive”;

(B) in subparagraph (D), by striking “parents and other caregivers (including foster parents)” and inserting “parents, kinship caregivers, and foster parents”;

(C) by striking “and” at the end of subparagraph (E);

(D) by striking the period at the end of subparagraph (F) and inserting “; and”; and

(E) by adding at the end the following:

“(G)(i) peer-to-peer mentoring and support programs with demonstrated experience fostering constructive relationships between children and families and mentors with relevant lived experience or interactions with the child welfare system; and

“(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an expenditure for a service described in clause (i) may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or more of family support services, family preservation services, family reunification services, or adoption promotion and support services, as long as the expenditure is related to serving the children and families in the specified category and consistent with the overall purpose of the category.”;

(2) in paragraph (2)(B)—

(A) in clause (i), by striking “children” and inserting “children, youth.”; and

(B) in clause (ii), by striking “extended” and inserting “kinship”;

(3) in paragraph (7)(A), by inserting “with kinship caregivers or” before “in a foster family home”; and

(4) by adding at the end the following:

“(11) YOUTH.—The term ‘youth’ means an individual who has not attained 26 years of age.”

(b) KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 427 (42 U.S.C. 627) is amended—

(A) in the section heading, by striking “FAMILY CONNECTION GRANTS” and inserting “KINSHIP NAVIGATORS”;

(B) in subsection (a)—

(i) in the matter preceding paragraph (1), by striking “helping” and inserting “administering programs to help”;

(ii) by striking “of—” and all that follows through “a kinship” and inserting “of a kinship”;

(iii) in paragraph (1)(C)—

(i) by striking “and” at the end of clause (iii);

(II) by adding “and” at the end of clause (iv); and

(III) by adding at the end the following:

“(v) connections to individualized assistance, as needed.”;

(iv) by striking paragraphs (2) through (4);

(v) by redesignating subparagraphs (A) through (G) of paragraph (1) as paragraphs (1) through (7), respectively;

(vi) by redesignating clauses (i) through (iv) and clause (v) (as added by clause (iii)(III) of this subparagraph) as subparagraphs (A) through (E), respectively;

(vii) by moving each provision so redesignated 2 ems to the left; and

(viii) by striking “caregiving,” and inserting “caregiving.”;

(C) in subsection (b)—

(i) in paragraph (1), by striking “1 or more of”;

(ii) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (4) as paragraphs (4) and (5), respectively, and inserting after paragraph (2) the following:

“(3) a description of how the entity will directly fund, or provide data to the Secretary for, an evaluation which will publish and submit information to the clearinghouse described in section 476(d)(2) and which is designed to meet the requirements of section 471(e)(4)(C), or a description of how the funds will be used to help the State transition to a program for which the State will seek reimbursement under section 474(a)(7);”;

(iii) in paragraph (4) (as so redesignated), by striking “and” at the end;

(iv) in paragraph (5) (as so redesignated), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(v) by adding at the end the following:

“(6) if the entity is a State, local or tribal child welfare agency—

“(A) documentation of support from a relevant community-based organization with experience serving kinship families when applicable; or

“(B) a description of how the organization plans to coordinate its services and activities with those offered by the relevant community-based organizations.”;

(D) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

“(d) **FEDERAL SHARE.**—An entity to which a grant is made under this section may use the grant to pay not more than 75 percent of the cost of the activities to be carried out by the entity pursuant to this section.”;

(E) in subsection (g)—

(i) by striking all that precedes “2 percent” and inserting the following:

“(g) **RESERVATION OF FUNDS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.**—The Secretary may reserve”; and

(ii) by striking “subsection (h)” the 2nd place it appears and inserting “section 437(b)(6)”; and

(F) by striking subsection (h).

(2) **RESERVATION OF DISCRETIONARY FUNDS.**—Section 437(b) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)), as amended by section 108(b) of this Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(6) **KINSHIP NAVIGATORS.**—The Secretary shall reserve \$10,000,000 for grants under section 427 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029.”.

(3) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Section 474(a)(7) (42 U.S.C. 674(a)(7)) is amended by striking “427(a)(1)” and inserting “427(a)”.

#### **SEC. 111. AVOIDING NEGLECT BY ADDRESSING POVERTY.**

(a) **FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES.**—Section 431(a)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)(1)), as amended by section 110(a)(1) of this Act, is amended—

(1) in subparagraph (F), by striking “and” after the semicolon;

(2) in subparagraph (G), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(H)(i) services providing nonrecurring short term benefits (including supports related to housing instability, utilities, transportation, and food assistance, among other basic needs) that address immediate needs related to a specific crisis, situation, or event affecting the ability of a child to remain in a home established for the child that is not intended to meet an ongoing need; and

“(ii) for purposes of this subpart, an expenditure for a service described in clause (i) may be treated as an expenditure for any 1 or more of family support services, family preservation services, family reunification services, or adoption promotion and support services as long as the expenditure is related to serving the children and families in the specified category and consistent with the overall purpose of the category.”.

(b) **STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS.**—Section 432(a) (42 U.S.C. 629b(a)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (9), by striking “and” after the semicolon;

(2) in paragraph (10), by striking the period and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following:

“(11) provides a description of policies in place, including training for employees, to address child welfare reports and investigations of neglect concerning the living arrangements or subsistence needs of a child with the goal to prevent the separation of a child from a parent of the child solely due to poverty, to ensure access to services described in section 431(a)(1)(H).”.

#### **SEC. 112. STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR CASEWORKERS.**

(a) **REAUTHORIZATION OF, AND INCREASE IN FUNDING FOR, CASEWORKER VISITS.**—Section 436(b)(4)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(4)(A)) is amended by striking “each of fiscal years 2017 through 2023” and inserting “fiscal year 2025 and \$26,000,000 for fiscal year 2026 and each succeeding fiscal year”.

(b) **MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.**—Section 433(e) (42 U.S.C. 629c(e)) is amended by striking paragraphs (1) and (2) and inserting the following:

“(1) **BASE ALLOTMENT.**—From the amount reserved pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fiscal year, the Secretary shall first allot to each State (other than an Indian tribe) that has provided to the Secretary such documentation as may be necessary to verify that the jurisdiction has complied with section 436(b)(4)(B)(ii) during the fiscal year, a base allotment of \$100,000, and shall then allot to each of those States an amount determined in paragraph (2) or (3) of this subsection, as applicable.

“(2) **TERRITORIES.**—From the amount reserved pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fiscal year that remains after applying paragraph (1) of this subsection for the fiscal year, the Secretary shall allot to each jurisdiction specified in subsection (b) of this section to which a base allotment is made under such paragraph (1) an amount determined in the same manner as the allotment to each of such jurisdictions is determined under section 423 (without regard to the initial allotment of \$70,000 to each State).

“(3) **OTHER STATES.**—From the amount reserved pursuant to section 436(b)(4)(A) for any fiscal year that remains after applying paragraphs (1) and (2) of this subsection for the fiscal year, the Secretary shall allot to each State (other than an Indian tribe) not specified in subsection (b) of this section to which a base allotment was made under paragraph (1) of this subsection an amount equal to such remaining amount multiplied by the supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits percentage of the State (as defined in subsection (c)(2) of this section) for the fiscal year, except that in applying subsection (c)(2)(A) of this section, “subsection (e)(3)” shall be substituted for “such paragraph (1)”.

(c) **REQUIREMENT TO USE FUNDS TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF CASEWORKER VISITS WITH FOSTER CHILDREN.**—Section 436(b)(4)(B)(i) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)(4)(B)(i)) is amended to read as follows:

“(i) **IN GENERAL.**—A State to which an amount is paid from amounts reserved under subparagraph (A) shall use the amount to improve the quality of monthly caseworker visits with children who are in foster care under the responsibility of the State, with an emphasis on—

“(I) reducing caseload ratios and the administrative burden on caseworkers, to improve caseworker decision making on the safety, permanency, and well-being of foster children and on activities designed to increase retention, recruitment, and training of caseworkers;

“(II) implementing technology solutions to streamline caseworker duties and modernize systems, ensuring improved efficiency and effectiveness in child welfare services;

“(III) improving caseworker safety;

“(IV) mental health resources to support caseworker well-being, including peer-to-peer support programs; and

“(V) recruitment campaigns aimed at attracting qualified caseworker candidates.”.

(d) **ELIMINATION OF COST-SHARE PENALTY TIED TO MONTHLY CASEWORKER VISIT STANDARD.**—Section 424(f) (42 U.S.C. 624(f)) is amended—

(1) by striking “(1)(A)”; and

(2) by striking paragraphs (1)(B) and (2).

#### **SEC. 113. DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS FOR IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INCARCERATED PARENTS AND CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.**

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Section 439 (42 U.S.C. 629i) is amended to read as follows:

“**SEC. 439. STATE PARTNERSHIP PLANNING AND DEMONSTRATION GRANTS TO SUPPORT MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FOSTER CHILDREN AND THE INCARCERATED PARENTS OF THE CHILDREN.**

“(a) **AUTHORITY.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary may make demonstration grants to eligible State partnerships to develop, implement, and provide support for programs that enable and sustain meaningful relationships between covered foster children and the incarcerated parents of the children.

“(2) **PAYMENT OF ANNUAL INSTALLMENTS.**—The Secretary shall pay each demonstration grant in 5 annual installments.

“(3) **1-YEAR PLANNING GRANTS.**—The Secretary may make a planning grant to a recipient of a demonstration grant, to be paid to the recipient 1 year before payment of the 1st annual installment of the demonstration grant and in an amount not greater than any installment of the demonstration grant, if—

“(A) the recipient includes a request for a planning grant in the application under subsection (c); and

“(B) the Secretary determines that a planning grant would assist the recipient and improve the effectiveness of the demonstration grant.

“(b) **ELIGIBLE STATE PARTNERSHIP DEFINED.**—

“(1) **IN GENERAL.**—In this section, the term ‘eligible State partnership’ means an agreement entered into by, at a minimum, the following:

“(A) The State child welfare agency responsible for the administration of the State plans under this part.

“(B) The State agency responsible for adult corrections.

“(2) **ADDITIONAL PARTNERS.**—For purposes of this section, an eligible State partnership may include any entity with experience in serving incarcerated parents and their children.

“(3) **PARTNERSHIPS ENTERED INTO BY INDIAN TRIBES OR TRIBAL CONSORTIA.**—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), if an Indian tribe or tribal consortium enters into a partnership pursuant to this section that does not consist solely of tribal child welfare agencies (or a consortium of the agencies), the partnership shall be considered an eligible State partnership for purposes of this section.

“(c) **APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.**—An eligible State partnership seeking a demonstration grant under this section to carry out a program described in subsection (a)(1) shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require. The application shall include the following:

“(1) A summary of the program, including how the program will support a meaningful

relationship between a covered foster child and an incarcerated parent of the child.

“(2) A description of the activities to be carried out by the program, which must include all of the activities described in subsection (d) that are in the best interest of the covered foster child.

“(3) A framework for identifying—

“(A) each covered foster child eligible for services under the program, including, to the extent practicable, coordination of data between relevant State child welfare agencies and court systems; and

“(B) the roles and responsibilities of the entities in the partnership.

“(4) Documentation that the applicant is an eligible State partnership.

“(5) Assurances that the applicant will participate fully in the evaluation described in subsection (f)(2) and shall maintain records for the program, including demographic information disaggregated by relevant characteristics with respect to covered foster children and incarcerated parents who participate in the program.

“(d) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES.—To the extent that the activities are in the best interest of the covered foster child, the activities referred to in subsection (c)(2) shall include the following:

“(1) REVISION OF POLICIES.—Through consultation with incarcerated parents and their families, grantees shall promote organizational policies of participating child welfare entities and collaborating correctional facilities to promote meaningful relationships through regular and developmentally appropriate communication and visitation between covered foster children and the incarcerated parents, including, when appropriate, the following:

“(A) For child welfare entities—

“(i) inclusion of parents in case planning and decision making for children;

“(ii) regular sharing of information and responses to requests for information between caseworkers and incarcerated parents with respect to the case information of a child, any changes to a case, permanency plans, requirements to maintain parental rights, and any efforts to terminate parental rights;

“(iii) appropriate opportunities for incarcerated parents to demonstrate their relationship with a covered foster child given their incarceration, including training and courses required for a service plan; and

“(iv) the enhanced visitation described in paragraph (2).

“(B) For correctional facilities, fostering visitation and communication that is developmentally appropriate in terms of—

“(i) the nature of communication and visitation, including—

“(I) the ability to physically touch parents;

“(II) engaging with parents in locations that are appropriate for the age and development of the child;

“(III) exchanging items that are appropriate to the age and development of the child, include expectations that are appropriate for the age and development of the child related to behavior, attire, and wait times; and

“(IV) allowing appropriate adults to bring children if legal guardians are not available to promote regular contact;

“(ii) reasonable inclusion of all children of the parent;

“(iii) communication and visitation at times when the children are available;

“(iv) security procedures to comfort children and be minimally invasive; and

“(v) promoting parent-child relationships regardless of the sentence imposed on the parent.

“(2) ENHANCED VISITATION.—

“(A) Grantees shall facilitate weekly communication and, for at least 9 days each year, in-person visitation between a covered foster child and any incarcerated parent of the child.

“(B) Electronic visitation (such as live video visits, phone calls, and recorded books) may be used but shall not be the sole method to promote a meaningful relationship for purposes of the grant.

“(C) Enhanced visitation programs shall—

“(i) integrate best practices for visitation programs with incarcerated parents and their children;

“(ii) adopt developmentally appropriate visitation policies and procedures such as those described in paragraph (1)(B);

“(iii) reduce or eliminate the cost of developmentally appropriate communication and visitation for the covered foster child, which may include the purchase of communication technology, covering transportation, insurance, and lodging costs, costs related to providing appropriate visitation spaces and activities, and other relevant costs;

“(iv) to the extent practicable, integrate appropriate parenting education to help prepare and process visits; and

“(v) avoid restricting visitation and communication as a punishment for the incarcerated parents.

“(3) TRAINING.—Grantees shall incorporate ongoing training for child welfare workers, correctional facility staff, and other program providers to understand the importance of promoting meaningful relationships between children and incarcerated parents.

“(4) CASE MANAGEMENT.—Grantees shall provide case management services for the incarcerated parents of a covered foster child to promote the relationship, access to services, and coordination with the caseworkers of the covered foster child to strengthen the relationship.

“(5) LEGAL ASSISTANCE.—Grantees shall facilitate access to necessary legal services and may use grant funds for services that are not reimbursable under other Federal programs.

“(e) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of the cost of any activity carried out using a grant made under this section shall be not greater than 75 percent.

“(f) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, EVALUATIONS, AND REPORTS.—

“(1) TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.—The Secretary shall provide technical assistance with respect to grants under this section, including by—

“(A) assisting grantees in understanding best practices in promoting meaningful relationships between incarcerated parents and their children as well as consulting with appropriate stakeholders when developing their programs;

“(B) assisting grantees with establishing and analyzing implementation and performance indicators; and

“(C) conducting an annual technical assistance and training meeting and an annual grantee meeting so that grantees can learn from the experiences of other grantees.

“(2) EVALUATIONS.—The Secretary shall conduct an evaluation of program outcomes, including with respect to parent and child well-being, parent-child interactions, parental involvement, awareness of child development and parenting practices, placement stability, and termination of parental rights with respect to covered foster children and incarcerated parents, to measure program effectiveness, as determined by the Secretary, and identify opportunities for improved program practices and implementation.

“(3) REPORTS TO THE CONGRESS.—

“(A) INITIAL REPORT.—Not later than 3 years after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall submit to the

Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report that includes—

“(i) the number of applications for grants under this section;

“(ii) the number of grants awarded, and the amounts for each grant; and

“(iii) information on the grants, including—

“(I) interim results of the evaluation described in paragraph (2);

“(II) disaggregated data on covered foster children and incarcerated parents;

“(III) information on the composition of eligible State partnerships;

“(IV) best practices for facilitating meaningful relationships between covered foster children and incarcerated parents; and

“(V) barriers to implementation or expansion of programs funded under this section.

“(B) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 6 years after the date of the enactment of this section, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report that includes—

“(i) the final results of the evaluation described in paragraph (2); and

“(ii) recommendations for refinements to grant requirements to improve program outcomes.

“(g) AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY WITH RESPECT TO INDIAN TRIBES AND TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—

“(1) WAIVER OR MODIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS.—In making a grant to an Indian tribe or tribal organization under this section, the Secretary may waive the matching requirement of subsection (e) or modify an application requirement imposed by or under subsection (c) if the Secretary determines that the waiver or modification is appropriate to the needs, culture, and circumstances of the Indian tribe or tribal organization.

“(2) EVALUATION.—The Secretary shall use tribally relevant data in carrying out the evaluation under subsection (f)(2) with respect to an Indian tribe or tribal organization.

“(h) LIMITATIONS ON AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary not more than \$35,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2026 through 2029 to carry out this section.

“(i) DEFINITION OF COVERED FOSTER CHILD.—In this section, the term ‘covered foster child’ means a child that—

“(1) is in foster care; and

“(2) has at least 1 parent incarcerated in a Federal, State, or local correctional facility.”

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(1) Section 431(a)(2)(B)(vii) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)(2)(B)(vii)) is amended by striking “(as defined in section 439(b)(2)).”

(2) Section 431(a) (42 U.S.C. 629a(a)), as amended by sections 106(b)(2) and 110(a)(4) of this Act, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(12) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’ means a structured, managed program in which children are appropriately matched with screened and trained adult volunteers for one-on-one relationships, involving meetings and activities on a regular basis, intended to meet, in part, the child’s need for involvement with a caring and supportive adult who provides a positive role model.”

#### SEC. 114. GUIDANCE TO STATES ON IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION AND REPORTING FOR YOUTH IN RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAMS.

Within 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Department of Education, the Administration for Children and Families, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the



Administration for Community Living, the Department of Justice, and other relevant policy experts, as determined by the Secretary, shall issue and disseminate, or update and revise, as applicable, guidance to State agencies in administering State plans approved under parts B and E of title IV of the Social Security Act on the following:

(1) Best practices for Federal and State agencies to collect data and share information related to the well-being of youth residing in residential treatment facilities, including those facilities operating in multiple States or serving out-of-state youth.

(2) Best practices on improving State collection and sharing of data related to incidences of maltreatment of youth residing in residential treatment facilities, including with respect to meeting the requirement of section 471(a)(9)(A) of such Act for such youth in foster care.

(3) Best practices on improving oversight of youth residential programs receiving Federal funding, and research-based strategies for risk assessment related to the health, safety, and well-being of youth in the facilities.

#### SEC. 115. STREAMLINING RESEARCH, TRAINING, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING.

(a) REPURPOSING DISCRETIONARY RESEARCH SET-ASIDE.—Section 435(c) (42 U.S.C. 629e(c)) is amended to read as follows:

“(c) EVALUATION, RESEARCH, AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WITH RESPECT TO TARGETED PROGRAM RESOURCES.—Of the amount reserved under section 437(b)(1) for a fiscal year, the Secretary shall use not less than—

“(1) \$1,000,000 for technical assistance to grantees under section 437(f) and to support design of local site evaluations with the goal of publishing and submitting evaluation findings to the clearinghouse established under section 476(d), or to award grants to allow current or former grantees under section 437(f) to analyze, publish, and submit to the clearinghouse data collected during past grants; and

“(2) \$1,000,000 for technical assistance required under section 429B of this Act to support effective implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and to support development of associated State plan measures described pursuant to section 422(b)(9) of this Act.”

(b) ELIMINATION OF RESEARCH SET-ASIDE FROM MANDATORY FUNDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Section 436(b) (42 U.S.C. 629f(b)), as amended by the preceding provisions of this Act, is amended by striking paragraph (1) and redesignating paragraphs (2) through (5) as paragraphs (1) through (4), respectively.

(2) CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.—

(A) Section 433(a) (42 U.S.C. 629c(a)) is amended by striking “436(b)(3)” and inserting “436(b)(2)”.

(B) Section 433(e) (42 U.S.C. 629c(e)), as amended by section 112(b) of this Act, is amended by striking “436(b)(4)(A)” and inserting “436(b)(3)(A)” each place it appears.

(C) Section 434(a)(2)(A) (42 U.S.C. 629d(a)(2)(A)) is amended by striking “436(b)(4)(B)” and inserting “436(b)(3)(B)”.

(D) Section 437(b)(1) (42 U.S.C. 629g(b)(1)) is amended by striking “436(b)(1)” and inserting “435”.

(E) Section 437(f)(3) (42 U.S.C. 629g(f)(3)) is amended by striking “436(b)(5)” and inserting “436(b)(4)”.

(F) Section 438(c) (42 U.S.C. 629g(c)) is amended in each of paragraphs (1) through (3) is amended by striking “436(b)(2)” and inserting “436(b)(1)”.

#### SEC. 116. REPORT ON POST ADOPTION AND SUBSIDIZED GUARDIANSHIP SERVICES.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Within 2 years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Sec-

retary of Health and Human Services shall prepare and submit to the Committee on Ways and Means of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Finance of the Senate a report on children who enter into foster care under the supervision of a State administering a plan approved under part B or E of title IV of the Social Security Act after finalization of an adoption or legal guardianship.

(b) INFORMATION.—The Secretary shall include in the report information, to the extent available through the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System and other data sources, regarding the incidence of adoption disruption and dissolution affecting children described in subsection (a) and factors associated with such circumstances, including—

(1) whether affected individuals received pre- or post-legal adoption services; and

(2) other relevant information, such as the age of the child involved.

(c) POST-ADOPTION SERVICES AND GUARDIANSHIP.—The Secretary shall include in the report—

(1) a summary of post-adoption services and guardianship in each State that are available to families that adopted children from foster care and the extent to which the services are evidence-based or evidence-informed.

(2) a summary of funding and funding sources for the services in each State, including set-asides under the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program.

#### SEC. 117. EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) IN GENERAL.—The amendments made by this title shall take effect on October 1, 2025, and shall apply to payments under part B of title IV of the Social Security Act for calendar quarters beginning on or after such date.

(b) DELAY PERMITTED IF STATE LEGISLATION REQUIRED.—If the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines that State legislation (other than legislation appropriating funds) is required in order for a State plan developed pursuant to part B of title IV of the Social Security Act to meet the additional requirements imposed by the amendments made by this title, the plan shall not be regarded as failing to meet any of the additional requirements before the 1st day of the 1st calendar quarter beginning after the first regular session of the State legislature that begins after the date of the enactment of this Act. For purposes of the preceding sentence, if the State has a 2-year legislative session, each year of the session is deemed to be a separate regular session of the State legislature.

(c) APPLICATION TO PROGRAMS OPERATED BY INDIAN TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS.—In the case of an Indian tribe, tribal organization, or tribal consortium that the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines requires time to take action necessary to comply with the additional requirements imposed by the amendments made by this Act (whether the tribe, organization, or tribal consortium has a plan under section 479B of the Social Security Act or a cooperative agreement or contract entered into with a State), the Secretary shall provide the tribe, organization, or tribal consortium with such additional time as the Secretary determines is necessary for the tribe, organization, or tribal consortium to take the action to comply with the additional requirements before being regarded as failing to comply with the requirements.

### TITLE II—STRENGTHENING STATE AND TRIBAL CHILD SUPPORT

#### SEC. 201. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the “Strengthening State and Tribal Child Support Enforcement Act”.

#### SEC. 202. IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRIBAL CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

(a) IMPROVING THE COLLECTION OF PAST-DUE CHILD SUPPORT THROUGH STATE AND TRIBAL PARITY IN THE ALLOWABLE USE OF TAX INFORMATION.—

(1) AMENDMENT TO THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.—Section 464 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 664) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(d) APPLICABILITY TO INDIAN TRIBES AND TRIBAL ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVING A GRANT UNDER THIS PART.—This section, except for the requirement to distribute amounts in accordance with section 457, shall apply to an Indian tribe or tribal organization receiving a grant under section 455(f) in the same manner in which this section applies to a State with a plan approved under this part.”.

(2) AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNAL REVENUE CODE.—

(A) Section 6103(a)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by striking “any local child support enforcement agency” and inserting “any tribal or local child support enforcement agency”.

(B) Section 6103(a)(3) of such Code is amended by inserting “, (8)” after “(6)”.

(C) Section 6103(l) of such Code is amended—

(i) in paragraph (6)—

(I) by striking “or local” in subparagraph (A) and inserting “tribal, or local”;

(II) by striking “AND LOCAL” in the heading thereof and inserting “TRIBAL, AND LOCAL”;

(III) by striking “The following” in subparagraph (B) and inserting “The”;

(IV) by striking the colon and all that follows in subparagraph (B) and inserting a period; and

(V) by adding at the end the following:

“(D) STATE, TRIBAL, OR LOCAL CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.—For purposes of this paragraph, the following shall be treated as a State, tribal, or local child support enforcement agency:

“(i) Any agency of a State or political subdivision thereof operating pursuant to a plan described in section 454 of the Social Security Act which has been approved by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under part D of title IV of such Act.

“(ii) Any child support enforcement agency of an Indian tribe or tribal organization receiving a grant under section 455(f) of the Social Security Act.”.

(ii) in paragraph (8)—

(I) in subparagraph (A), by striking “or State or local” and inserting “, State, tribal, or local”;

(II) in subparagraph (B), by striking “enforced pursuant to a plan described” and all that follows through “of such Act” and inserting “enforced pursuant to the provisions of part D of title IV of the Social Security Act”;

(III) by adding at the end of subparagraph (B) the following: “The information disclosed to any child support enforcement agency under subparagraph (A) with respect to any individual with respect to whom child support obligations are sought to be established or enforced may be disclosed by such agency to any agent of such agency which is under contract with such agency for purposes of, and to the extent necessary in, establishing and collecting child support obligations from, and locating, individuals owing such obligations.”;

(IV) by striking subparagraph (C) and inserting the following:

“(C) STATE, TRIBAL, OR LOCAL CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT AGENCY.—For purposes of this paragraph, the term ‘State, tribal, or local child support enforcement agency’ has the same meaning as when used in paragraph (6)(D).”; and

(V) by striking “AND LOCAL” in the heading thereof and inserting “TRIBAL, AND LOCAL”; and

(iii) in paragraph (10)(B), by adding at the end the following new clause:

“(iii) The information disclosed to any child support enforcement agency under subparagraph (A) with respect to any individual with respect to whom child support obligations are sought to be established or enforced may be disclosed by such agency to any agent of such agency which is under contract with such agency for purposes of, and to the extent necessary in, establishing and collecting child support obligations from, and locating, individuals owing such obligations.”

(D) Section 6103(p)(4) of such Code is amended—

(i) by striking “subsection (1)(10), (13)(A), (13)(B), (13)(C), (13)(D)(i), (16), (18), (19), or (20), or any entity” in the matter preceding subparagraph (A) and inserting “subsection (1)(6), (8), (10), (13)(A), (13)(B), (13)(C), (13)(D)(i), (16), (18), (19), or (20), or any Indian tribe or tribal organization receiving a grant under section 455(f) of the Social Security Act, or any entity”;

(ii) by striking “subsection (1)(10)” in subparagraph (F)(i) and inserting “subsection (1)(6), (8), (10)”;

(iii) by striking “subsection (1)(10), (13)(A), (13)(B), (13)(C), (13)(D)(i), (16), (18), (19), or (20) or any entity” each place it appears in the matter following subparagraph (F)(iii) and inserting “subsection (1)(6), (8), (10), (13)(A), (13)(B), (13)(C), (13)(D)(i), (16), (18), (19), or (20), or any Indian tribe or tribal organization receiving a grant under section 455(f) of the Social Security Act, or any entity”; and

(iv) by inserting “, (8)” after “paragraph (6)(A)” in the matter following subparagraph (F)(iii).

(E) Section 6103(p)(9) of such Code is amended by striking “or local” and inserting “tribal, or local”.

(F) Section 6402(c) of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following: “For purposes of this subsection, any reference to a State shall include a reference to any Indian tribe or tribal organization receiving a grant under section 455(f) of the Social Security Act.”

(b) REIMBURSEMENT FOR REPORTS.—Section 453(g) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 653(g)) is amended—

(1) in the subsection heading, by striking “STATE”; and

(2) by striking “and State” and inserting “, State, and tribal”.

(c) TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS.—Paragraphs (7) and (33) of section 454 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 654) are each amended by striking “450b” and inserting “5304”.

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 have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and submit 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, title IV-B of the Social Security Act provides critical resources to protect the safety and well-being of children in foster care and gives States, Tribes, and territories flexibility to invest in prevention services to keep vulnerable families together whenever possible.

Unfortunately, this program's authorization expired in 2021, and the program has remained largely unchanged since 2008. We have a responsibility to make sure programs are meeting the current needs of families and children who need it most. This reauthorization modernizes title IV-B child welfare and increases accountability.

Right now, there are nearly 400,000 children in foster care and over 20,000 who age out of foster care each year.

The Ways and Means Committee has worked over the last year to conduct a top-to-bottom review of America's child welfare system. We have held four hearings and numerous meetings with stakeholders to better understand where there are gaps and how to bring this program up to date to better serve America's children.

I represent one of the poorest congressional districts in the country, and before I came to Congress, I practiced family law and saw firsthand how our child welfare system can put undue strain on families.

That is why I particularly appreciate the opportunity to have worked with Representative GWEN MOORE in introducing legislation, included in this bill, that prevents child services from taking children away from their families simply because they live in poverty. I think about the families separated in Missouri over the years not because of abuse or neglect, but because they could not afford to pay a bill or new clothes for their kids. It is not right, and this bill corrects that.

The bipartisan legislation before us today is the result of those efforts. It will not only help address the needs of children in foster care but also support early intervention to help families stay together. The Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act, introduced by the chair and ranking member of our Work and Welfare Subcommittee, DARIN LAHOOD and DANNY DAVIS, reauthorizes title IV-B for 5 years and makes significant reforms to modernize the program.

Specifically, this bill reduces the administrative burden by dialing back paperwork and reporting requirements that are hamstringing caseworkers.

It streamlines funding to improve access for Indian Tribes.

It helps to prevent abuse and neglect and ensures that children are not separated from their parents solely on the basis of poverty.

It addresses the caseworker crisis by improving access to training.

It strengthens the support systems for the 2.5 million grandparents and relatives who provide kinship care to children who might otherwise enter foster care.

It also improves outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care into adulthood.

This bill also includes important legislation from Representative HERN of Oklahoma that would strengthen the tools available to States and Tribes to ensure millions of families receive the child support that they are owed. That bill would prevent the IRS from blocking State child support agencies from using contractors to administer their child support enforcement program.

Representative HERN's bill, the Strengthening State and Tribal Child Support Enforcement Act, will harmonize Federal laws so States can continue carrying out necessary child support payment collections and allow Tribal child support agencies to direct access to the same tools. This bill avoids additional significant costs that would be incurred by both States and Tribes should the IRS policy go into place as it is scheduled to do on October 1.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this critical 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 the Supporting America's Children and Families Act which now includes two bipartisan bills reported out of the Ways and Means Committee. The first bill would improve and invest in the child welfare services funded under title IV-B of the Social Security Act. The second bill would ensure that State and Tribal child support agencies can continue their work collecting child support obligations.

I thank Chairman LAHOOD and Chairman SMITH for their hard work and willingness to work with all of us to reauthorize and improve title IV-B of the Social Security Act. I am delighted that today we advance this important bipartisan step forward for our most vulnerable children and families.

This bill would increase guaranteed funding for the MaryLee Allen Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program for the first time since 2006, providing meaningful new resources to make sure that all children are in safe, loving, and permanent homes.

The bill includes good ideas from Members on both sides of the aisle and from the experts who work with us to prioritize child well-being in our work. Indeed, 228 national, State, and local organizations support this bill.

The bill provides modest but critical funding for services all along the child welfare continuum. In addition to providing essential new funding for both State and Tribal child welfare agencies to support families, this bill includes numerous, significant investments and policy updates that improve child safety and well-being.

For example, it invests in aiding kinship caregivers in finding needed resources and in evidence-based programs that successfully help parents



overcome substance abuse disorders to safely care for their children.

It increases funding for Tribal child welfare programs while respecting Tribal sovereignty and monitoring State engagement with the Indian Child Welfare Act. It updates our policies to help ensure that parents and children have access to independent legal representation in child welfare court proceedings, a key factor to address racial disparities in child welfare.

This bill also provides for a new demonstration project to promote meaningful relationships between foster youth and their incarcerated parents. I have personally witnessed the power of these relationships to change lives for both children and parents, and I thank Chairman LAHOOD and my colleagues for working with me to help these families.

In addition, the bill amends section 6103 of the Internal Revenue Code to bring parity to Tribal and State child support services agencies and to ensure that State agencies can continue their work.

I recognize the leadership of Representatives GWEN MOORE, SUZAN DELBENE, and KEVIN HERN on these provisions. I know that agencies across the country and in my home State of Illinois are eager for us to enact this provision quickly to resolve a longstanding discrepancy in interpretation about the use and definition of contractors assisting child support agencies. The bill strengthens the ability of State, Tribal, and local child support agencies to serve families.

Both the substance of this bill and the true collaboration in both policy areas, child welfare and child support, represent a great step forward.

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

□ 1600

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) for his leadership and guidance in bringing this bill through the Committee on Ways and Means and to the floor here today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill, Supporting America's Children and Families Act. As chairman of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Work and Welfare, I am proud that this important legislation demonstrates our bipartisan commitment to supporting vulnerable children and parents.

H.R. 9076 includes two pieces of legislation. Title I contains the Protecting America's Children by Strengthening Families Act, which I am proud to have introduced alongside the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), my fellow Illinoisan, ranking member, and friend, to reauthorize and improve the title

IV-B program. The bill authorizes and reforms this critical child welfare program to support the safety and well-being of children in foster care.

The second bill, introduced by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. HERN), my friend, will ensure States and Tribes have the tools necessary to continue to collect child support on behalf of millions of families across the country.

This combined legislation is the result of a yearlong investigation and five committee hearings to learn from stakeholders, parents, States, and Tribes.

Based on that work, we have been able to include bipartisan reforms that will improve child welfare and strengthen child support enforcement across the country, all with the net result of a reduction in direct Federal spending of \$136 million over 10 years.

I repeat: a reduction in direct Federal spending of \$136 million over 10 years.

I take seriously the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare's responsibility to ensure we have a strong safety net for the nearly 400,000 children in foster care who have experienced the trauma and hardships of abuse and neglect. This 5-year reauthorization modernizes the program and expands what we know is working.

In government, we often add to programs over time in our quest for improvement. Regrettably, though, this approach often results in fragmented and complex systems that burden administrators and hinder families from receiving the support they desperately need.

This legislation before us tackles that issue and represents the most significant reform and investment in child welfare since 1993. Bills which were the foundation of what we are voting on here today were introduced by 19 Members from both sides of the aisle.

This bill will specifically save taxpayer dollars through early intervention to keep families together, whenever possible, and reduce the need for foster care. It removes ineffective requirements and ensures States are accountable for matching Federal funds. It frees up more time for States and caseworkers to focus on families by requiring HHS to reduce administrative burdens by 15 percent. It expands access for Tribal communities by streamlining funding. It builds support systems for the 2.5 million grandparents and relatives serving as kinship caregivers, and strengthens post-adoption services to ensure children waiting for adoption find stable, loving homes.

This child welfare reauthorization has been endorsed by more than 200 organizations, including our county, State, and Tribal partners, as well as organizations representing former foster youth with lived experience.

Title II of the legislation before us includes the Strengthening State and Tribal Child Support Enforcement Act,

which I am proud to have cosponsored with the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. HERN), the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. SCHWEIKERT), the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SMUCKER), the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DELBENE), and the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE).

A key tool used to collect past-due child support is the Treasury Offset Program. This program allows States to collect past-due obligations by intercepting Federal tax refunds from noncustodial parents.

Last year, 5 percent, or \$1.5 billion, was collected for families through this program. Unfortunately, a statutory conflict threatens to cut off access to this important child support enforcement tool for 42 States.

Absent a legislative change by October 1 of 2024, States and the Federal Government face hundreds of millions in new costs, and millions of families could lose vital child support payments.

The legislation before us today will formally authorize State use of contractors while maintaining protections on the privacy of Federal taxpayer information.

Further, this bill authorizes Tribal access, providing much-needed parity for Tribal enforcement agencies.

I thank the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. HERN) for his leadership on this bill. This legislation has garnered endorsements from State and Tribal organizations across the country, including 26 sitting Governors.

The well-being and safety of America's children and struggling families is an area of common interest for both Republicans and Democrats. This legislation demonstrates what we can achieve when we work together. I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for his continued partnership and leadership on these issues.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I acknowledge all of the members of the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare and the full Committee on Ways and Means for their valuable contribution and input on this important legislation.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Social Security.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) for yielding me time, and I congratulate the gentleman on this outstanding piece of legislation.

In my youth, I had the opportunity as then-president of the senate in the State of Connecticut to work with Dr. Edward Zigler, commonly referred to as the "father of Head Start" and really the person who came up with the concept and idea of family resource centers.

He looked out around the country and saw schoolhouses, and he saw them in communities where everybody attended and worked and said: Wouldn't that be a great idea?

What he understood most, of course, is that childcare is family care. That is something that the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) has exemplified in my time with him on the Ways and Means Committee, and I am proud to be associated with the gentleman, this bill, and the work and effort of Dr. Edward Zigler of Yale University.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. HERN).

Mr. HERN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in favor of H.R. 9076. I am very pleased that this legislation is coming to the House floor today.

The Supporting America's Children and Families Act includes two pieces of legislation that are important, not just to me, but to my home State of Oklahoma.

The first is the Strengthening State and Tribal Child Support Enforcement Act. This policy finally allows Tribes who run their own child support enforcement programs to access Treasury offset programs. There are 38 federally recognized Tribes in my home State of Oklahoma, 10 of which run their own child support enforcement agencies.

I would highlight this policy has the support of the National Tribal Child Support Association and the National Association of Tribal Child Support Directors.

Not only does this policy help Tribes efficiently run their child support enforcement programs, but States will be allowed to continue to use the third-party contractors to help run their child support enforcement programs. Child support enforcement is not a partisan issue. It is the right thing for Congress to do. Without this fix, we risk States having to bring all child support enforcement services in-house, costing hundreds of millions of dollars, along with the immediate pause of child support programs to millions of families, an absolutely devastating outcome. We cannot let this happen to our families.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this piece of legislation to help the children that are growing up to be this country's next generation because it truly is about the children.

This legislation also includes the Tribal Welfare Support Act, which allows child welfare funds from title IV-B to be paid directly to Tribes, reducing the regulatory burden for both States and Tribes.

Right now, child welfare payments are made to Tribes through two different funding allocations, one of which goes through States rather than directly to Tribal guarantees, an outdated and fragmented system that needs to be updated.

The Tribal Child Welfare Support Act modernizes this process so that title IV-B recipients can spend more time helping their children and families, and less time wading through the red tape.

The Supporting America's Children and Families Act passed unanimously out of the Committee on Ways and Means and contains priorities that will help families and children all over this country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this piece of legislation today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin (Ms. MOORE), one of the most serious antipoverty advocates that I know.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. Speaker, I associate myself with all of the comments that have been made today in describing the importance of these bills and getting us one step closer to a really healthy, robust title IV-B reauthorization and putting that into law.

I especially thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare, and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare, for bringing us here today.

As the chairwoman of the bipartisan Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth, I am so grateful that so many of our priorities of the bipartisan caucus were addressed in this package, including ensuring that poverty is not synonymous with neglect; including enhancing peer-to-peer mentoring; listening to the voices of those with experience in the welfare system; supporting youth as they transition out of foster care; giving a larger, broader platform to considering kinship caregiving as opposed to removing children from homes; improving our child support collection mechanisms; and strengthening the Indian Child Welfare Act.

This package includes a much-needed, albeit small, increase in title IV-B dollars. Whatever way it is sliced, we can't make the system better or work the way we want without making investments.

One of my main priorities in Congress has been to make sure that poverty is not synonymous with neglect, and I was so very proud to work with the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) during the reauthorization effort to include this provision in the bill before us.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. VALADAO). The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield an additional 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Wisconsin.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me additional time.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to work with the gentleman to require that States receiving these Federal dollars to identify and implement policies that would prevent family separation solely based on poverty.

I am so proud to have worked on the provision to make sure that those with

lived experience in the foster youth system are included in the development of State plans.

It is also critically important that we are passing the part of this legislation, the Strengthening State and Tribal Support Act, that piece of the legislation championed by the gentleman from Oklahoma (Mr. HERN). I have joined him in cosponsoring this bill to improve a key mechanism for enforcing child support orders, and that is intercepting State tax refunds.

Mr. Speaker, child support payments are vital to child well-being and development, and they help fight child poverty and keeping both parents engaged in supporting their child.

Tribes are currently unable to directly request that tax refunds be garnished for child support, and States have problems, as well, with these hindrances. This is also a direct affront to Tribal sovereignty not to be able to provide these services directly. I am so glad that these provisions have been included.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I include in the RECORD a letter from those 27 Governors, including Wisconsin's own Tony Evers, in support of the provisions which they argue will support the ability of State, Tribal, and local child support agencies to adequately service families.

Hon. CHARLES E. SCHUMER,  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,  
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. MIKE JOHNSON,  
Speaker, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

Hon. HAKEEM JEFFRIES,  
Minority Leader, House of Representatives,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER SCHUMER, MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, SPEAKER JOHNSON, AND MINORITY LEADER JEFFRIES: As governors from across the nation, we urge you to pass the bipartisan Strengthening State and Tribal Child Support Act (H.R. 7906), which will help support the ability of state, Tribal, and local child support agencies to serve families in each of our states.

Maintaining states' and Tribes' ability to perform child support enforcement via federal tax offset is vital to ensuring the well-being of over 12 million children currently receiving the services of the child support program. It is critical that states and Tribes do not lose the ability to perform this essential action.

#### BACKGROUND

Federal law requires child support agencies to access federal tax information (FTI) for establishment and enforcement purposes, including the federal tax refund offset program. Child support agencies across the country contract with private partners for this and a variety of critical services, including management of state disbursement units, which are responsible for disbursement of all child support funds collected in a state, as well as technology services related to the maintenance and development of child support case management systems.

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has determined that direct access to FTI by Tribal child support programs is prohibited under current law and that contractor access to FTI is limited. Until last year, IRS audits of

child support programs held those federal tax information findings in abeyance while waiting for a legislative solution.

The IRS and the federal Office of Child Support Services (OCSS) had agreed for decades to allow contractor access to FTI for the sole purpose of establishing and enforcing child support obligations as long as contractors adhered to stringent measures to ensure that confidential information remained protected. Importantly, contractors have never breached the extensive confidentiality requirements. A legislative solution to this issue is long overdue.

#### LEGISLATIVE SOLUTION

Introduced by Representative Kevin Hern (R-Oklahoma) and lead cosponsors Representatives Gwen Moore (D-Wisconsin) and Suzan DelBene (D-Washington), H.R. 7906 resolves a long-standing discrepancy in interpretation under the Internal Revenue Code of the use and definition of contractors, who are integral to assisting child support agencies in establishing and enforcing child support obligations. The companion to H.R. 7906, S. 3154, was introduced in the Senate by Senator John Thune (R-South Dakota) and Senator Ron Wyden (D-Oregon).

The federal tax refund offset program collects tens of millions in current and past due child support every year. These vital funds for children across the nation are in jeopardy if resolution to this discrepancy is not addressed.

Based on preliminary cost estimates obtained from child support program directors across the country, absent this legislative solution, compliance with IRS requirements would total over \$1 billion nationally in additional costs for child support programs each year. These are the additional administrative costs associated with bringing current vendor-provided services in-house. The legislation would also provide Tribes with direct access to federal tax information to offset federal tax refunds from parents owing support to their children and allow them to obtain vital information to establish and enforce child support for children served by tribal child support agencies.

#### BIPARTISAN, BICAMERAL, STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

After many months of review and negotiation, this important effort and bill as introduced has earned bipartisan support and a nearly identical bill is pending in the Senate. Additionally, the IRS and the Office of Child Support Services were meaningfully engaged and involved throughout the process and supported the provisions. The four national associations representing state and Tribal child support agencies also support the bill.

This legislative fix clarifying the use of contractors provides administrative certainty for all agencies and provides Tribes with direct access to tax refund offsets, giving them another tool to support children and families. We support the passage of H.R. 7906 to avoid disruption in these essential services.

Sincerely,

Governor Tony Evers, Wisconsin.  
Governor Mike DeWine, Ohio.  
Governor Kay Ivey, Alabama.  
Governor Gavin Newsom, California.  
Governor Ned Lamont, Connecticut.  
Governor Josh Green, M.D., Hawaii.  
Governor Laura Kelly, Kansas.  
Governor Wes Moore, Maryland.  
Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan.  
Governor Katie Hobbs, Arizona.  
Governor Jared Polis, Colorado.  
Governor John Carney, Delaware.  
Governor J.B. Pritzker, Illinois.  
Governor Janet Mills, Maine.  
Governor Maura Healey, Massachusetts.

Governor Mike Parson, Missouri.  
Governor Phil Murphy, New Jersey.  
Governor Doug Burgum, North Dakota.  
Governor Josh Shapiro, Pennsylvania.  
Governor Kristi Noem, South Dakota.  
Governor Phil Scott, Vermont.  
Governor Mark Gordon, Wyoming.  
Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham, New Mexico.  
Governor Tina Kotek, Oregon.  
Governor Dan McKee, Rhode Island.  
Governor Spencer Cox, Utah.  
Governor Jay Inslee, Washington.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. SMUCKER).

Mr. SMUCKER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) for yielding and his work on this very important piece of legislation. I thank the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS), the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare, as well as the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LAHOOD), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Work and Welfare, for their work on this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 9076, the Supporting America's Children and Families Act.

□ 1615

One pillar of this bill reauthorizes the title IV-B program, which underpins much of the child welfare system and provides funding to States for community-based and prevention-oriented programs and services. At the time we are reauthorizing, we take that opportunity to learn how we can improve. The improvements that are included today in that reauthorization will make a difference in the lives of many children and families throughout the country.

I am very pleased that included in this package are four bills that I introduced after receiving input from providers and others in my community and district. After hearing from individuals and witnesses in hearings about this package, it will include policies to allow IV-B dollars to support kinship families, reduce the administrative burden on State and Tribal child welfare agencies, support caseworkers, and gather data on the effectiveness of post-adoptive services.

The other pillar of this bill would ensure that States can utilize contractors to support their child welfare programs, which is a vital flexibility that the two counties that I represent, Lancaster and York Counties in Pennsylvania, take advantage of to ensure steady child support payments.

H.R. 9076 aims to provide vital resources to families in need with the goal of preventing them from needing the foster care system in the first place and helping to maintain healthy families, which are the cornerstone of our society.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes" on this bill.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. YAKYM).

Mr. YAKYM. Mr. Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of the Supporting America's Children and Families Act, which updates key child welfare programs for the first time since 2008. That includes reducing the paperwork burden for States and caseworkers, improving training and technology available to caseworkers, strengthening support systems for grandparents and other relatives who become primary caregivers, and providing better services for those aging out of foster care.

When I was board chair for the Boys and Girls Clubs of St. Joseph County, I saw firsthand the difference programs of all types make in putting at-risk youth on a path to success and keeping them on it. That involves treating each child as an individual, not just another number, and assessing their unique circumstances and needs. This takes more work, but it ensures the best result for the child, their family, and their communities.

I thank Mr. LAHOOD, Mr. DAVIS, Chairman SMITH, and Ranking Member NEAL for their bipartisan work on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I thank Chairman SMITH and Chairman LAHOOD for their partnership on this important bill that would improve and invest in child welfare services under title IV-B and ensure that State and Tribal support agencies can continue their work. I think all of our committee can be seriously proud of this bipartisan work. It has been a pleasure working with the chair and Mr. LAHOOD.

Mr. Speaker, I urge passage of this very important legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is not often that you find this many Republicans and Democrats voting together on a bill, but when it comes to supporting children and families, we are in strong agreement.

Reauthorizing title IV-B is a first-in-a-generation win that will refocus the child welfare system on keeping families together and preventing abuse and neglect.

Don't take our word for it. The title IV-B coalition, made up of 22 different national, State, and county organizations, has endorsed this legislation. The National Foster Youth Institute, the Child Welfare League of America, and the National Indian Child Welfare Association have all come out in support of this legislation.

I also give a special thanks to Paris Hilton for personally coming to Capitol Hill and testifying about her lived experience and in support of reforms to this program.

The legislation from Representative HERN that is also included in this bill will fix the disconnect between Federal laws that are currently setting up State and Tribal child support agencies for failure.

The child support enforcement program is one of the most highly successful, cost-effective Federal programs that millions of families across the country rely upon each month. The program produces \$5 in benefits for every \$1 spent on administration. Nearly 13 million children, representing 18 percent of all children, are affected by this program.

Twenty-six States from the National Governors Association have endorsed this legislation, along with the National Conference of State Legislatures, the National Association of Counties, and the National Association of Tribal Child Support Directors.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join them in supporting this important legislation, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SMUCKER). 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. 9076, as amended.

The question was taken.

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

## NO FOREIGN ELECTION INTERFERENCE ACT

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 8314) to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to impose penalties with respect to contributions to political committees from certain tax exempt organizations that receive contributions from foreign nationals, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 8314

*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 "No Foreign Election Interference Act".*

### SEC. 2. PENALTIES WITH RESPECT TO CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL COMMITTEES FROM CERTAIN TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS THAT ACCEPT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FOREIGN NATIONALS.

*(a) IN GENERAL.—Part I of subchapter B of chapter 68 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new section:*

**"SEC. 6720D. CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL COMMITTEES FROM CERTAIN TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS THAT ACCEPT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FOREIGN NATIONALS.**

*"(a) IN GENERAL.—Any specified tax exempt organization that makes any disqualified polit-*

*ical committee contribution shall pay a penalty equal to twice the amount of such contribution.*

*"(b) DISQUALIFIED POLITICAL COMMITTEE CONTRIBUTION.—For purposes of this section—*

*"(1) IN GENERAL.—The term 'disqualified political committee contribution' means, with respect to any organization described in section 501(c), any contribution made by such organization to a political committee (as defined in section 301 of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (52 U.S.C. 30101)) if such organization received, during any testing period, any contribution or gift (within the meaning of section 6033(b)(5)) from a foreign national (as defined in section 319(b) of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (52 U.S.C. 30121(b))).*

*"(2) TESTING PERIOD.—The term 'testing period' means, with respect to any contribution by an organization described in section 501(c), the 8-year period ending on the date of such contribution, except that such period shall not include any period before the date of the enactment of this section.*

*"(c) SPECIFIED TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATION.—For purposes of this section—*

*"(1) IN GENERAL.—The term 'specified tax exempt organization' means, with respect to any taxable year, any organization described in section 501(c) and exempt from tax under section 501(a) if—*

*"(A) the gross receipts of such organization for such taxable year equal or exceed \$200,000, or*

*"(B) the assets of such organization (determined as of the close of such taxable year) equal or exceed \$500,000.*

*"(2) COORDINATION WITH REVOCATION OF TAX EXEMPT STATUS BY REASON OF MAKING DISQUALIFIED POLITICAL COMMITTEE CONTRIBUTIONS.—An organization which is not exempt from tax under section 501(a) solely by reason of section 501(s) shall be treated for purposes of paragraph (1) of this subsection as exempt from tax under section 501(a) with respect to the application of this section to the first 3 disqualified political committee contributions of such organization."*

*(b) REVOCATION OF EXEMPT STATUS UPON THIRD DISQUALIFIED POLITICAL COMMITTEE CONTRIBUTION.—Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:*

*"(s) REVOCATION OF EXEMPT STATUS OF CERTAIN ORGANIZATIONS THAT ACCEPT CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FOREIGN NATIONALS AND MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL COMMITTEES.—Any organization described in subsection (c) which makes more than 2 disqualified political committee contributions (as defined in section 6720D(b)) shall not be exempt from taxation under subsection (a) for any taxable year ending on or after the date of the third such contribution."*

*(c) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sections for part I of subchapter B of chapter 68 of such Code is amended by adding at the end the following new item:*

*"Sec. 6720D. Contributions to political committees from certain tax exempt organizations that accept contributions from foreign nationals."*

*(d) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to contributions made on or after January 1, 2025, by organizations described in section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.*

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SMITH) and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SANCHEZ) 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 submit 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, as the world's leading democracy, America is an example for other nations to follow. Unfortunately, we are also a target for foreign actors seeking to influence and undermine our elections.

Over the last year, as the Ways and Means Committee has been investigating concerns about the dangerous influence of foreign money in our elections, it has become clear that loopholes exist in our tax code that foreign donors are able to take advantage of so they can influence the American electoral process.

Under current law, foreign nationals are prohibited from making contributions directly to election campaigns, but there is nothing that prohibits overseas cash flowing from foreign nationals, including from adversaries of the United States such as China, through tax-exempt organizations and then into the hands of super-PACs.

The committee's investigation discovered a particularly disturbing example: A foreign national from Switzerland has given over \$100 million through his tax-exempt organization to the Sixteen Thirty Fund, a 501(c)(4), which subsequently distributed \$63 million to super-PACs to try to persuade the American voter. According to The New York Times, the Sixteen Thirty Fund is a leading vehicle for dark money on the left.

The American people shouldn't be subjected to TV and digital ads financed by the Chinese Communist Party or other nations seeking to influence the vote or undermine our elections. I think we can all agree that our election should be free of foreign interference.

For my colleagues on the left who spent years talking about foreign election interference, this should be a no-brainer. If they care about our electoral process and making sure it is open and fair, then we need to make sure foreign money can't drown out the voices of American voters.

The legislation before us today, sponsored by Representative MALLIOTAKIS, the No Foreign Election Interference Act, was approved in May by the Ways and Means Committee 39-1. Her bill closes this loophole in the tax code by restricting tax-exempt organizations from donating to super-PACs after receiving foreign gifts or contributions, and it revokes the tax-exempt status for organizations that repeatedly violate this law.