

I join all Arkansans in congratulating Michael on this achievement and look forward to seeing more of his work throughout Little Rock in the years to come.

HONORING THE NURSES OF PARKLAND HEALTH & HOSPITAL SYSTEM IN DALLAS, TEXAS

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the nurses of Parkland Health & Hospital System in Dallas, Texas, for their commitment to serving their patients and our community during this novel coronavirus pandemic.

Madam Speaker, the sacrifices that the nurses fighting COVID-19 have been immense. At Parkland Memorial Hospital, over 300 medical staffers are caring for coronavirus patients in the Tactical Care Unit. One of these nurses has moved into an RV and has not seen her 7-month-old daughter in more than five weeks. Another has only had contact with her 2-year-old when she wore an N95 mask and gloves for a birthday hug. A third, who lives alone, has volunteered for every shift she can get to nurse the most critically ill COVID-19 victims.

As the first registered nurse elected to Congress, I am deeply aware of the sacrifices and expertise that medical professionals bring to their work, and I honor their selfless, dedicated service during this public health crisis. What our society is asking of them, the support staff, and all their families is immense, and we must endeavor to provide absolutely every possible resource for their work. This means that the current nationwide struggles to acquire personal protective equipment and testing materials are unacceptable, and I am committed to pushing for all our essential medical professionals to be properly equipped to provide the care our communities need and depend on at this time.

Madam Speaker, the contributions of the medical professionals serving in the city of Dallas, state of Texas, these United States, and across the globe are truly immeasurable. Therefore, on behalf of the U.S. House of Representatives and Texas' 30th Congressional District, I ask that my colleagues join me in recognizing and honoring the sacrifices and commitment of these essential medical staffers during this unprecedented novel coronavirus pandemic."

HEALTH AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY OMNIBUS EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 15, 2020

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 6800, the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. Our nation is experiencing unprecedented job loss as our communities deal

with a global health pandemic that is responsible for the deaths of more than 85,000 individuals in our country in just the past few months. We cannot wait another day, another week, or another month to take action. Our communities need help now and they are looking to Congress to lead. I'm grateful for the leadership of the House of Representatives, Speaker PELOSI, and our committee chairs and staff for working with us to put together an ambitious bill that will send needed help to individuals and families in the form of an additional direct stimulus payment; to our state and local governments, which are experiencing extreme budget shortfalls; and to our small businesses that are the backbone of our local economies and the heart of our communities. Although I am disappointed that the bill does not include several provisions including ongoing payments for individuals and families, additional funding to support child care, and a strong investment in our workforce systems, among other things, I will support this step forward.

We heard loud and clear from our state and local governments—they need more support to keep our communities safe. This bill includes \$915 billion in emergency funding to state and local governments, funding that can be used to help prevent teacher job loss and funding cuts to education and, importantly, the bill expands the use of funds to cover lost, delayed, or decreased revenue from the public health emergency. The HEROES Act also includes \$90 billion for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund that can be used to provide emergency support to students—including Dreamers, who were previously excluded from receiving emergency grants—schools, and institutions of higher education. These funds are critical to supporting public colleges and universities, addressing student mental health needs, and purchasing technology and mobile hotspots to support distance learning. Under this proposal, my home state of Oregon would receive approximately \$980 million.

During this public health crisis, no one should have to choose between affording basic needs or making payments on their student loans. The CARES Act suspended involuntary collection like wage garnishment or reduction of Social Security payments for delinquent federally-owned student loans. The HEROES Act follows my recommendation to extend these protections to all borrowers, including those who have privately held student loans.

Building on my earlier efforts to make sure K12 students can access school meals during school closures, this legislation funds school meal and child and adult care food programs with emergency relief that will help schools continue to meet the needs of children and their families. This bill will further help families access nutritious meals by increasing the SNAP benefit level by 15 percent.

I am grateful that this bill provides \$7 billion for child care, but this is far from the investment that is needed to support families, providers, and the child care workforce at this critical time. I will continue to fight for significant, additional funding in future relief packages. If child care is not available and affordable, families will not be able to return to work. Additionally, I will continue to fight for additional funding for the Community Services Block Grant program to support the vital anti-poverty work of the more than 1,000 Community Action agencies across this country.

We cannot overcome this virus until we drastically increase our public health efforts. The HEROES Act provides crucial funding to conduct national testing, implement a contact tracing and surveillance strategy, and allow all Americans to seek treatment for COVID-19 without worrying about the cost. The bill also increases support for our frontline health care providers, invests in public health infrastructure, and expands access to health coverage whether employer-provided, publicly supported, or on the open market. The HEROES Act also provides key resources to older adults and people with disabilities. The bill provides an additional \$85 million in funding for Older Americans Act (OAA) programs that were reauthorized earlier this year by legislation I was proud to lead. This means more resources for supportive services, nutrition programs, assistive technology, and elder rights protection activities.

The direct payments to individuals in the CARES Act was an important first step, but I know that too many people in Northwest Oregon and across the country need more support during this health and economic crisis. Although this bill does not provide at least \$2,000 per month for individuals through the duration of the pandemic, which I advocated for, it does provide a second stimulus payment of \$1200 to most individuals and, importantly, it retroactively fixes a problem in CARES and will now extend direct payments to individuals filing with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers.

More than 396,000 Oregonians have filed for unemployment insurance in the last two months. I know how important this support is during the pandemic, and I'm working in Congress to strengthen and expedite access to these benefits. The HEROES Act expands the additional \$600 in federal benefits added to every weekly unemployment compensation check through January 2021, and it extends eligibility for self-employed individuals, gig economy workers, and independent contractors. This vital economic support must continue until workers can safely get back on the job. Also it is truly unfortunate that, despite the merits of a more comprehensive approach, the HEROES Act does not include the Paycheck Guarantee Act, legislation spearheaded by Congresswoman PRAMILA JAYAPAL. The Paycheck Guarantee Act would allow most individuals to stay on payroll during this national emergency and keep their benefits, and it would also significantly reduce the number of people filing for Unemployment Insurance. I will continue to advocate for creative approaches like the Paycheck Guarantee Act that maximize the benefits to workers and the economy while also reducing bureaucracy.

We need to do more to protect workers from hazardous conditions on the job, and I will keep fighting for workplace protections and personal protective equipment for all workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am an original cosponsor of the COVID-19 Every Worker Protection Act, and I'm pleased that it is included in the HEROES Act with additional funding for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. Protecting essential workers during the pandemic is one of my top priorities. I have also advocated for premium pay for essential workers to recognize their role in sustaining our communities and the sacrifices they are making during the pandemic. The HEROES Act will provide frontline