

Ms. CLARK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of two pieces of legislation coming to the floor this week, the Child Care Is Essential Act, and the Child Care for Economic Recovery Act.

This pandemic has exposed fault lines that exist just beneath the surface of our society. Whether it is a broken healthcare system or the consequences of our Nation's history of racial injustice, this pandemic is exacerbating harms done by systems that fail our families. Our system of childcare is no exception.

Childcare is a powerful tool for educating our children and for fueling our economy. If we unite around its utility and take decisive action to save the childcare sector, we can help rebuild and revitalize our future.

Simply put, childcare is essential. But ignored, underappreciated, and neglected for so long, our system of early care and education is now at a breaking point.

Right now, 40 percent of our Nation's childcare centers and family childcare homes will be forced to close permanently without immediate financial support. Our children, moms, dads, doctors, nurses, teachers, small business owners, and over 23 million families will have nowhere to turn.

Think about that. Before this pandemic, it was difficult and sometimes nearly impossible for working families to find quality, affordable childcare. If the pandemic destroys 4 out of every 10 childcare spaces, how will parents return to work? How will businesses reopen? How many children will be pushed out of their classrooms?

Great outcomes for an entire generation of children are at stake and could be impacted for years if we don't invest now in early care and education. With proper investment, childcare can combat the economic and social inequities of our time, in addition to providing a foundation for our children. What is more, with an investment in childcare, we can stabilize and secure American families.

Before the pandemic, childcare costs often exceeded a family's rent or mortgage payment, driving parents out of the labor market entirely. Parents of color face even more hurdles and costs in finding affordable, high-quality care.

Economists are predicting that losing access to childcare is not just about losing 2 or 3 years of income. It is an entirely different trajectory for the rest of a parent's life. This also disproportionately impacts women in the workplace.

The rising costs of childcare are associated with a 13 percent decline in employment of mothers with children under 5. Investing in childcare is about ensuring moms can pay the bills and pursue their dreams. It is also an investment in opportunity and in equality for our Nation's mothers.

These bills will also honor our Nation's caregivers, who provide an essential service to our children, economy,

and community. In an industry where 96 percent of childcare professionals are women, and 40 percent of them are women of color, over 325,000 have lost their jobs since February. This workforce is already underpaid, many of them barely making minimum wage.

Our failure to value the work of caregivers is one of the many examples of how our society and how Congress fails to value women's work and, especially, the work of women of color.

Finally, it is not just our families who rely on childcare. Childcare is essential to our entire economy.

A survey from Northeastern University tells us that during the pandemic, working parents lose, on average, a full day of work productivity every week due to a lack of childcare. We know that has repercussions for our businesses.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation found that in one State alone, a lack of childcare is estimated to cost employers almost as much as \$3 billion annually in lost productivity, absences, and turnover rate.

The solution is not complicated. The problem we face is solvable. The two bills before us are a critical first step. Our Nation needs to seize this opportunity to provide equity in education, parity for women, and stability in our economy.

That is why I urge my colleagues to pass the Child Care Is Essential Act and the Child Care for Economic Recovery Act. It is time to invest in our children, our women, and our economy.

#### SUPPORTING ESSENTIAL WORKERS IN FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, a strong, reliable food supply chain is important 365 days a year. But COVID-19 has underscored just how much we rely on this essential industry in times of crisis.

The men and women who work to provide our Nation with the food, fiber, and energy that we depend on each and every day are among the unsung heroes in this crisis.

In April, I introduced the GROCER Act to establish a Federal tax holiday for our grocery store and convenience store employees from February 15, 2020, to June 15, 2020. The bill benefits individuals making less than \$75,000 a year and gives the Treasury Secretary the discretion to extend this benefit for an additional 3 months.

To build on the support for the GROCER Act, Congressman DWIGHT EVANS and I introduced the AG CHAIN Act.

The AG CHAIN Act extends the GROCER Act to the entire food supply chain defined by recent Department of Homeland Security guidance. That includes our farmers, ranchers, meatpackers, distributors, and more. It also builds on the GROCER Act to in-

clude a payroll tax exemption in addition to the Federal tax holiday.

Supporting our essential workers in the food supply chain is something that Republicans, Democrats, and everyone in-between can get behind.

A recent poll showed support from the public as well. According to the Morning Consult, 90 percent of voters consider agricultural and food production workers essential, and 93 percent consider grocery store workers and convenience store workers essential. When it comes to providing tax relief to the essential workers who keep our grocery stores and our farms operational, two-thirds of voters supported some kind of tax relief for these individuals.

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Those numbers speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

We all depend on a strong food supply chain to feed our families. Even in times of crisis, the shelves and coolers in our grocery stores have remained stocked. Now, that would not be the case if we were not blessed with such a hardworking and resilient agriculture industry.

Food security is national security, and employees in the food supply chain are working overtime to ensure crops are harvested, shelves and coolers are stocked, and Americans have food on the table.

The AG CHAIN Act is a simple way to say thank you to the hardworking men and women across the full spectrum of the food supply chain. It is a commonsense way to support these workers, and it is a way to put more of their hard-earned money back into their own pockets.

Today and every day, I am grateful for the hard work of our food supply chain workers, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the AG CHAIN Act.

#### A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE PASSING OF MY FRIEND JOHN LEWIS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow writes in part:

Life is real!  
Life is earnest!  
And the grave is not its goal;  
Dust thou art to dust returneth,  
Was not spoken of the soul.

John still lives in most of us because his soul, his spirit, and his heart still live.

Mr. Speaker, like all Americans, I reacted with deep sadness to the passing of my friend, Congressman John Lewis. John and I served together for 12 years in Congress, and I was so proud to have known him as a colleague, a mentor, and a friend.

A lot has been said about the man that John Lewis was, but what strikes me the most is the man that he never became.