

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

**Chairman Bob Casey's Opening Statement
"Preventing Tragedies and Promoting Safe, Accessible, and Affordable Homes"
March 31, 2022**

Good morning. The hearing will come to order. Today, we will discuss a topic of bipartisan interest: promoting home safety for seniors, children and people with disabilities as well as families in general. This has been a longstanding priority of the Committee. In October 2019, the Committee released a bipartisan report on falls and held a hearing on the same topic. We know that a quarter of older adults, one quarter, fall every year, and that the majority of these falls occur within the home. I witnessed the struggles that accompany a fall firsthand when my mother experienced a fall in December of 2021, early December. She is doing well now and recovered, but it was two long and difficult months between surgery, then rehabilitation, then returning home. So many families have had this experience.

For some, a fall can be prevented by installing a grab bar in their home. For others, it might be participating in an evidence-based program, like Matter of Balance, which offers small group activities and exercise training. Investments in home modifications and prevention programs are a small price to pay, considering that senior falls contribute to \$50 billion, that's fifty with a 'B', in medical costs per year and unfortunately lead to 34,000 deaths among seniors. But in some cases, home modifications alone are not

enough. Every year, emergency rooms across the country treat over 22,000 preventable injuries caused by falling furniture, like dressers and television sets. Annually, over 3,000 of those injured by tip-overs are older adults. It's not only seniors who are harmed. Children are also put at great risk. And tragically, the vast majority of those killed by furniture tip-overs, 81 percent, are children. My home state of Pennsylvania was touched by these devastating losses. We lost Katie Lambert and Curren Collas [CAUL-AS] to tip-overs. Katie was three years old when she died due to injuries sustained from a furniture tip-over in her family's home in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, just outside of Philadelphia. And Curren, from West Chester, Pennsylvania as well, close to the city of Philadelphia, outside of the city. Curren, when he passed away, was only two years old.

There is no reason for any family to endure this unspeakable loss. Compounding the grief and loss these families experience is the fact that these deaths might have been prevented by stronger standards. Mandatory stability standards would make our homes safer. I am proud to lead the bipartisan Stop Tip-overs of Unstable Risky Dressers on Youth, or STURDY Act, alongside Senators Klobuchar, Blumenthal and Cotton. This Act would require the Consumer Product Safety Commission to create a mandatory stability standard for furniture. It would require companies to ensure their products are tested for safety before that product is sold. It's a simple, commonsense requirement that will save lives. Today, we will learn more about what Congress can do to keep our children, our seniors and our families safe at home.