

Ranking Member Tim Scott's Opening Statement

Hearing: 21st Century Caregiving: Supporting Workers, Family Caregivers, Seniors and People with Disabilities

Date: 6/17/21

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding another really important hearing for those of us that are all very concerned about our aging community and the way in which they age and care that they receive.

I've had the good fortune, and still have the good fortune in many ways to be raised by a single mom who was a caregiver and she spent 40 plus years as a nurse's assistant in hospitals caring for our elderly patients. Having an appreciation for the hard work and the struggle of caregivers is something that I grew up watching and experiencing.

The truth is, Mr. Chairman I think that you and I both agree that caregivers need to be celebrated today coming out of the pandemic in a way that we have never ever celebrated them, and too often and too many of them are working for too few dollars in their paychecks. Having been raised with my brother in that household, I will say that the one thing that I would never ever change is the compassion and the sensitivity that my mom learned through being a caregiver made me a very different person and my brother a better person, and frankly, it is that important part of caregiving that you can't buy. You just can't buy people who love and care for the patients as my mother did and so many others do today.

We think about people that we know first, and I think about Claudia Bentley in my Charleston office and Kathy Crawford in my Charleston office, who both are caregivers. Claudia's husband, Ed, who suffers from Alzheimer's and she basically has at least two full time jobs at the exact same time. Kathy has cared for two elderly aunts into their 90s in her home and then her mother in law who passed away, unfortunately, just last week at 91 years old. Cathy and her husband moved the mother in law into the house so they could provide high level, quality care for the ones that they love most. I think it is one of the best things we can do, is take care of those that took care of us when we could not take care of ourselves.

From 2008 to 2018, the population over 65 years of age grew from 39 million to 52 million. By 2060, that population will be 95 million people. That's a lot of folks who need a high level of care, and my concern with the President's approach to this issue is just throwing money at the issue won't solve the problem of quality control. It won't solve the problem of family members being able to take care of family members. We can't use a one size fits all plan. It's one of the reasons why I will release today a white paper, a discussion on a better way forward, a way that allows for us to look at the

unique opportunities within family systems and our other apparatus to provide the type of unique programs and care provision that our seniors want and deserve.

The truth is that having our seniors spend all their assets down to be eligible for Medicaid makes it very difficult for us to have intergenerational wealth created, especially in those communities where their net worth is eight times lower, than the rest of our country. So we have to make sure that we focus our attention on programs that do not require us to see the resources depleted before you are even eligible for assistance.

I think there is a better way and our focus on that better way is going to be the focus our attention on providing a flexible, tailored program that allows for caregivers to be appreciated, celebrated and allows the family members who need the help the most to have access to resources that allow for their lives to be the best. I am a big believer that the latter range should be better than the former range as we learned in the good book.

So, with that Mr. Chairman I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. I thank each and every one of you for being here today and I look forward to having a robust discussion on a way for us to improve the quality of the outcome for those we love the most.