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CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE OF TEXAS

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

**VIRTUAL MARKUP HEARING ON
BUDGET RECONCILIATION RESOLUTION FOR
BUILD BACK BETTER ACT**

**STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF
BUDGET RECONCILIATION FOR
BUILD BACK BETTER ACT**

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

CISCO WEBEX

2:00 P.M. (EDT)

FLOOR STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF

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- Mr. Chairman, as a senior member of the Committees on the Judiciary, on Homeland Security, and on the Budget, I rise in strong support of S. Con. Res. 14, which reorders budgetary priorities to provide \$3.5 trillion investments to build back better and to support visionary and transformative investments in the health, well-being, and financial security of America's workers and families.

- It is often said that the federal budget is an expression of the nation's values and the budget resolution before us is a clear declaration of congressional Democrats' commitment to ensuring that our government, our economy, and our systems work For The People.
- Mr. Chairman, these long-overdue investments in America's future will be felt in every corner of the country and across every sector of American life, building on the success of the American Rescue Plan, accommodating historic infrastructure investments in the legislative pipeline, and addressing longstanding deficits in our communities by ending an era of chronic underinvestment so we can emerge from our current crises a stronger, more equitable nation.
- Should our friends across the aisle join us in this endeavor, it would send a powerful signal to the American people if our colleagues across the aisle would join us in this effort because nothing would better show them that their elected representatives can set partisanship aside and put America first.
- And that bipartisan achievement would portend success for similar initiatives in the area of strengthening the infrastructure of democracy in which every American has a vital interest, national and homeland security, and criminal justice and immigration reform.
- I would urge my Republican colleagues to heed the words of Republican Governor Jim Justice of West Virginia who said colorfully several months ago, "At this point in time in this nation, we need to go big. We need to quit counting the egg-sucking legs on the cows and count the cows and just move. And move forward and move right now."
- The same sentiment was expressed more eloquently by Abraham Lincoln in 1862 when he memorably wrote:

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

- Mr. Chairman, the bipartisan action we took in February 2021 when we passed the American Rescue Plan was a giant step in the right direction, but it was a targeted response to the immediate and urgent public health and economic crises; it was not a long-term solution to many of the pressing challenges facing our nation that have built up over decades of disinvestment in our nation and its people in every region and sector of the country.
- We simply can no longer afford the costs of neglect and inaction; the time to act is now.
- The Build Back Better Act makes the transformative investments that we need to continue growing our economy, lower costs for working families, and position the United States as a global leader in innovation and the jobs of the future.
- This \$3.5 trillion gross investment will build on the successes of the American Rescue Plan and set our nation on a path of fiscal responsibility and broadly shared prosperity for generations to come.
- The Build Back Better Act will provide resources to improve our education, health, and child care systems, invest in clean energy and sustainability, address the housing crisis, and more; all while setting America up to compete and win in the decades ahead.
- The Build Back Better Act is paid for by ensuring that the wealthy and big corporations are paying their fair share and Americans making less than \$400,000 a year will not see their taxes increase by a penny.

- Let me repeat that: No American making less than \$400,000 a year will not see their taxes increase by a penny.
- In sum, Mr. Chairman, the investments made by the Build Back Better Act will expand opportunity for all and build an economy powered by shared prosperity and inclusive growth.
- No one is better prepared or more experienced to lead the American renaissance that will be produced by the investments made by the Build Back Better Act than President Biden, the architect of the American Rescue Plan and who as Vice-President during the Obama Administration oversaw the implementation of the Recovery Act, which saved millions of jobs and rescued our economy from the Great Recession the nation inherited from a previous Republican administration.
- And let us not forget that President Obama also placed his confidence in his vice-president to oversee the rescue of the automotive industry, which he did so well that the American car industry fully recovered its status as the world leader.
- Mr. Chairman, let me briefly highlight some of the key investments made by the Build Back Better Act:

EDUCATION

- The Plan will provide two years of free pre-K and two years of free community college to ensure every student has the tools, resources, and opportunity to succeed in life.
- It will also invest in our teachers and institutions that serve minority students and provide funding to give school buildings long-overdue infrastructure updates.
- Children lead happier, healthier, and more productive lives when they have had access to high-quality education and that is why the Build Back Better Act makes necessary investments to increase quality education by four years for all students at no cost to hard-working families.

HEALTH CARE

- The Build Back Better Act expands access to quality, affordable health care by strengthening the Medicare, Medicaid, and Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace programs that millions of Americans already rely on.
- It includes a major new expansion of Medicare benefits, adding a dental, hearing, and vision benefit to the program for the very first time.
- It strengthens the ACA by extending the enhanced Marketplace subsidies that were included in the American Rescue Plan.
- It also provides an affordable coverage option for the more than two million Americans living in states that have not expanded Medicaid under the ACA and do not earn enough to qualify for Marketplace subsidies.
- The Build Back Better Act's investment in home- and community-based services will increase access to critical services and create new and better-paying jobs for care providers.
- When the Build Back Better Act is fully implemented soon gone will be the terrible old days when too many Americans are forced to choose between medical care and putting food on the table or affording other necessities.

CHILD CARE

- The Build Back Better Act supports families in need of child care by providing access to safe, reliable, and high-quality care delivered by a well-trained child care workforce.
- This is important because our nation is strongest when everyone can join the workforce and contribute to the economy.

- That is why this investment is vital to so many millions of – especially women – who are often forced to choose between working to support their family or caring for their family.

PAID LEAVE

- Mr. Chairman, the United States is the richest nation in the world but one of the few modern democracies that lacks a paid leave program.
- The Build Back Better Act remedies this shameful failing by creating a national, comprehensive paid family and medical leave program, providing direct support to workers and families.
- This crucial investment will allow workers to take the time they need to bond with a new child, care for their own serious illness, or care for a seriously ill loved one without risking needed income or employment.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- In the area of housing, the Build Back Better Act makes investments to ensure that Americans have access to safe and affordable housing by providing resources to increase housing vouchers and funding for tribal housing.
- It also supports investments in programs that will help address our nation's housing crisis by increasing the supply of affordable homes for those in need and investing in historically underserved communities and those that have been previously left behind.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

- The Build Back Better Act will spur and empower comprehensive action to build an equitable clean energy economy with historic investments to transform and modernize the electricity sector, lower energy costs for Americans, improve air quality and public health, create good-paying jobs, and strengthen U.S. competitiveness – all while putting our country on the pathway to 100 percent carbon-free electricity by 2035.

- The Build Back Better Act extends and expands clean energy tax credits and supports clean electricity performance payments so utilities can accelerate progress toward a clean electric grid at no added cost to consumers.
- The Build Back Better Act invests in clean energy, efficiency, electrification, and climate justice through grants, consumer rebates, and federal procurement of clean power and sustainable materials, and by incentivizing private sector development and investment.
- Another exciting aspect of the Build Back Better Act, Mr. Chairman, is that it will drive economic opportunities, environmental conservation, and climate resilience – especially in underserved and disadvantaged communities – including through a new Civilian Climate Corps.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, AND INNOVATION INFRASTRUCTURE

- Mr. Chairman, advances in science, technology, and manufacturing are creating the industries and jobs of the future, and we must ensure that they are created here.
- That is why the Build Back Better Act invests in America’s ingenuity and competitiveness by revitalizing state-of-the-art laboratory facilities and research across the nation, including at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and other minority-serving institutions (MSIs), through new regional innovation hubs, and through federal science agencies.
- The Build Back Better Act will reinvigorate U.S. manufacturing by supporting supply chain resilience and modernization, Manufacturing USA institutes, the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, and facilities and research at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, all of which will strengthen America’s competitiveness in the global economy.

TAX CUTS FOR FAMILIES AND WORKERS

- The expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) enacted in the American Rescue Plan has already benefitted nearly 66 million children, put money in the pockets of millions of hard-working parents and guardians, and is expected to help cut child poverty by more than half.
- The Build Back Better Act not only extends this meaningful tax cut, but it also extends the expanded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the expanded Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, which help families make ends meet and put food on the table, reduce child poverty, and lessen the burden on hard-working Americans so they can provide a better future for America's children.

REINING IN PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

- The Build Back Better Act also achieves savings from following through on President Biden's call to give Medicare the power to negotiate lower prescription drug prices, saving money for patients as well as the federal government.
- Mr. Chairman, we have before us a once in a century opportunity to make gigantic progress in making ours a more perfect union, and to do it in a single bound with enactment of the Build Back Better Act, the most transformative legislation passed by this Congress since the Great Society and the New Deal.
- I proudly and strongly support S. Con. Res. 14, the budget reconciliation resolution for the Build Back Better Act, and urge all Members to join me in voting to report it favorably to the full House for passage.
- Thank you, I yield back the remainder of my time.