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Blunt, Reed, Scott, & Menendez Introduce Legislation to Improve Education & Economic Opportunities for Low-Income Families

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senators Roy Blunt (Mo.), Jack Reed (R.I.), Tim Scott (S.C.), and Bob Menendez (N.J.) today introduced the bipartisan Family Self Sufficiency Act, which would streamline and improve the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

"This bipartisan legislation will help more low-income Americans expand their education, save for the future, and reach their goal of becoming financially independent," **said Blunt**. "It is a commonsense step we can take to improve the FSS program and enhance support for people in Missouri and across the country who are working hard to create a better future for themselves and their families."

"The FSS program helps families achieve their financial goals so they can become independent. It provides a roadmap to stability and links them to critical support services to get there, like help with education, job-training, or childcare so individuals can support their families. Ultimately, it empowers people to gain marketable skills, improve their job prospects, and sets them on a path towards greater economic independence and self-sufficiency," **said Reed**. "Our bipartisan bill will streamline the program and make it more effective so it can reach more residents and give more folks an opportunity to build a better life."

"Every American wants the opportunity to succeed, and it is important for us to support families striving to achieve the American Dream," **said Scott**. "The bipartisan Family Self-Sufficiency Act will help our country's most vulnerable down the path towards financial independence, by providing them access to job-training or helping them attain a GED. These families are looking for a hand-up, not a handout, and I am proud to work alongside my colleagues Senators Blunt, Reed, and Menendez on this critical issue to help low-income families seeking better opportunities prosper."

"The Family Self Sufficiency program provides families receiving federal housing assistance a key pathway to success. By linking families to critical job-training, child care, and educational services, the FSS program empowers families to develop the skills and build the systems needed to achieve and

maintain success,” **said Menendez.** “Our bill will strengthen the already successful program and provide additional families an opportunity to thrive.”

The FSS program helps families enrolled in housing voucher or public housing programs increase their earnings, build savings, and make progress toward self-sufficiency. The Family Self Sufficiency Act would improve the FSS program by permanently consolidating duplicative programs, broadening services that can be provided to a participant, and authorizing the extension of the program to tenants who live in privately-owned properties with project-based assistance.

Specifically, the Family Self Sufficiency Act would:

- Improve the FSS program by permanently streamlining the Housing Choice Voucher-FSS and Public Housing-FSS into one program, which would relieve public housing agencies of the unnecessary burden of running two separate programs that share the same goal;
- Broaden the scope of the supportive services that may be offered to include attainment of a GED, education in pursuit of a post-secondary degree or certification, homeownership assistance, and training in asset management; and
- Expand the reach of the FSS program to more families that may be excluded due to a technicality related to the kind of housing assistance a family receives. The bill would authorize HUD to open up the FSS program to families that live in privately-owned properties subsidized with project-based rental assistance.

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