

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

Chairman Bob Casey's Opening Statement

"Beyond the 9 to 5: Dismantling Barriers and Building Economic Resilience for Older Workers"

Welcome to the Committee's third hearing of the 118th Congress, focused on dismantling barriers and building economic resilience for older workers. In April 2021, this Committee held a hearing about older workers' economic security, as millions felt the impact of the pandemic recession. Two years later, today's hearing revisits a similar topic, examining the state of the aging workforce today and opportunities to support these Americans into the future. We know that older Americans are working longer than ever before. Recent data shows that only 45 percent, just 45 percent of 65-year-olds are currently retired, compared to 58 percent in 2000. Many seniors seek to remain in the workforce to make ends meet or to regain income lost while caregiving. In fact, roughly one in three older adults aged 65 and older are economically insecure, with the average income being below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. And it is worse in communities of color: over half of Black and Hispanic older adults over the age of 65 are economically insecure. I think I speak for every American when I say this is unacceptable. We must work to ensure that older adults are economically secure in retirement, so they we can, they can spend time with their families and friends after decades of hard work and contributions to our economy. But this economic security cannot be achieved without protections in the workplace. I have continued to push Congress to shore up these protections, including dismantling barriers

like age discrimination. That is why I reintroduced my bipartisan Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (S. 1030), with Senators Grassley, Hassan, Collins, Baldwin, and Murkowski. This bipartisan bill, known by the acronym as we have a lot of them around here, “POWADA,” would restore crucial age discrimination protections and make it easier for older workers to seek justice in court when they experience ageism. But we know that, beyond age discrimination, our workplaces need safeguards to protect their workers. Unions can provide these critical protections for their workers, even into retirement – something that I heard time and again across Pennsylvania the past several weeks. In my hometown of Scranton, I heard from carpenters, union carpenters about the benefits that their local union provided, ensuring they could retire with strong pensions and good health care. In Plymouth Meeting, in the Southeastern corner of our state, just this past Monday I spoke to members of the food and commercial workers union Local 1776, and they told me how the union connected them to resources to assist with critical issues like caregiving and financial literacy. And today, I look forward to hearing from Dave McLimans – someone I have known a long time – let’s put that in the record. I have known him a while; he’s a retired steelworker from Parkesburg, PA, in Chester County, who will share his experience supporting other older workers’ transition into retirement. So, I believe Congress must continue fighting for workplace protections, fair wages, and retirement benefits to support older adults in the workplace and beyond. I want to thank Ranking Member Braun for again being with us today and helping us plan this hearing and I will turn to him now for his opening remarks.