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Shades of Blue Project Welcomes Bipartisan Senate Introduction of the NEST Act

Legislation led by Senators Andy Kim (D-NJ) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) would expand access to essential supplies and postpartum resources for new mothers and infants

Washington, DC: The Shades of Blue Project today welcomed the first U.S. Senate introduction of the Newborn Essentials Support Toolkit (NEST) Act in the U.S. Senate by Sens. Andy Kim (D-NJ) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The bipartisan legislation would codify the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Newborn Essentials Support Toolkit (NEST) program, establishing a lasting foundation for an initiative the Shades of Blue Project has championed for years.

HHS' Newborn Essentials Support Toolkits help families meet immediate needs after childbirth. They include items such as diapers, wipes, blankets and infant thermometers, postpartum recovery and breastfeeding supplies, and information about the national Maternal Mental Health Hotline. The pilot focuses on communities with increased need, prioritizing maternal care deserts, rural and Tribal communities, and areas with high maternal mortality rates.

"Those first couple days of my sons' lives were filled with immense joy but also the very real anxiety and uncertainty every parent faces. The NEST program has been a helping hand to new moms in the precious and daunting first chapter of their kids' lives. I'm proud to work with Senator Murkowski to codify and continue its success," said Senator Andy Kim (D-NJ).

Families who have received HHS Newborn Essentials Support Toolkits have responded positively. In HHS' 2025 evaluation, 98.5 percent of recipients reported being satisfied or extremely satisfied with their kits, 72 percent said the kits reduced their financial stress and 75 percent said they alleviated emotional distress.

"For years, we have distributed newborn supply kits and seen what it means to a mother to receive practical support when she needs it most," said Kay Matthews, Founder and Executive Director of the Shades of Blue Project. "I am grateful to Senators Kim and Murkowski for working together to bring the NEST Act to the Senate. With the cost of caring for an infant continuing to rise, a kit of essentials like diapers and postpartum supplies can ease financial pressure, support a mother's recovery and connect her with mental health resources. Every mother deserves that kind of support during the postpartum period."

The Senate introduction follows Congress's first-ever \$5 million investment in the HHS NEST pilot in the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations package. The NEST Act would codify the pilot and provide a foundation for reaching more families over time. Companion legislation, H.R. 6096, was introduced in the House by Reps. Julia Letlow (R-LA), Kim Schrier (D-WA), Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-IA) and Nanette Barragán (D-CA).

"The Shades of Blue Project is grateful to the bipartisan leaders in both chambers who recognize that supporting maternal and infant health starts with meeting families' basic needs," Matthews added. "We look forward to working with Congress to advance the NEST Act."

To learn more about the Shades of Blue Project, visit www.shadesofblueproject.org.

About the Shades of Blue Project

The Shades of Blue Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping women of color before, during and after childbirth through community resources, mental health advocacy, treatment and support. , treatment and support.