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Mr. President, a year ago, my two little boys sat right up there in the gallery above as I raised my right hand here on the floor. It was a moment unlike any other moment I've ever had in my life. My dear colleagues, I hope it's never lost upon us that we get to work a job whose job description is written in the Constitution of the United States. What a deeply humbling experience, one we should treasure every chance we get. Never in my life have I felt the call to serve so strongly and viscerally as I do right now. I believe we are in a moment of extraordinary consequence and magnitude. That the next five years will shape the next five decades. This -- there is nowhere else I'd rather be than to be able to have a voice in this room, and a vote in this chamber, of monumental decisions that will shape our nation's future through tumultuous times.

But there's a bittersweet taste now, a year later, as I look back upon the day I was sworn in. By my children's side, as they watched me a year ago, were my parents. Both born during the Korean War; born into poverty and struggled to survive. Both saw America as a place where they could achieve the closest thing that they could get to a guarantee that the family that they raise would have a better life than they did. It was actually predecessors in this room that passed the immigration reform that allowed my parents to come here. Had it not been for those decisions made here, our family story would have no choice and no chance in America. And the decisions we are making now are shaping families for generations to come. I am in awe of what this nation has afforded my family in just one generation.

But now, I think through an episode that happened a few weeks ago. I was with my father at the doctor's office, and the doctor asked my father, tell me about your son, tell me what he does for a living, as I was seated right next to him. My father fell silent. He turned to me and looked with embarrassed eyes and said, "I don't know." My father no longer remembers being in this chamber a year ago. He no longer remembers that momentous day I'd hoped our family would never forget. He no longer remembers that his hard journey from the Korean War to immigrating to America, that led to his son being sworn in as the very first Korean American senator ever. And it got worse. The next question the doctor asked him was, "What job did you have, what was your life's work?" And my father stared at the ground and paused and said, the same three words. "I don't know." Three worlds that I'm sure I will hear a lot more of from him. Because that was the day that my father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Now, what made this all the more painful is that the answer to my—to the doctor's question, what did my father do for his career, the answer is that my father was a



geneticist, a medical researcher, who spent his life trying to cure cancer and Alzheimer's. And now, as I was there witnessing Alzheimer's erase from my father's memory any recollections of his efforts to try to erase Alzheimer's from the world. I couldn't help but feel that Alzheimer's had won.

I remember dropping him off after the appointment and sitting in the car alone, left to grapple with our new future. Realizing for the first time that to my list of core identities, as a son, as a brother, a husband, a father, an American, a public servant, I now add, caregiver. But with all of these other identities that I've assumed, I've embraced them. They've brought me joy and opportunity. They brought me my partner for life; they brought me the most precious boys I could ever imagine. But this new identity as a caregiver felt like it brought my family certain pain. The doctor warned me that the next year or two of my life would be hell.

I remember having to rush back to the capitol for votes after that doctor's appointment, and I was actually standing in this very spot when one of you came to me and started telling me about a bill you wanted me to look at and I remember politely saying, I'm sorry, but I'm barely keeping it together right now, my father's not well, can we please talk about this tomorrow? And instead of walking away, my colleague stayed with me, showed me comfort, opened about their own struggles and challenges in their family. And I responded by sharing my growing fears about the uncertainty that lay ahead, that I would be forced to seek not the best care that my father could get, but instead, the best care for my father that my family could afford.

And suddenly, I felt inadequate as a son, and I panicked. I couldn't help but play back the last few years, and I beat myself up that I didn't see this coming. Was there something I could have done to better prepare for this moment? I should have taken the precautions to provide better care for my father and my family. And I fixated on a singular question—why is it so hard to provide care in this country?

And from that question comes others. Why is providing care so insanely complicated? Why does it feel like we are so alone when we try to provide care to the people we love? And for many, the disease or injury is only part of the problem. We are the richest, most powerful country in the world. Why does it cost so much to provide care? The answers explain my anxiety. The median cost for a private room for a senior care facility in New Jersey is \$14,788 per month. That's over \$177,000 per year. That is outrageous. It should be unacceptable. Who can afford that? I'll tell you, I can't. I look at the costs, and I look at our finances, and the cost of caregiving have been catastrophic for my family this year. But this is the reality for millions of Americans. And so many countless families are in much more



dire circumstances than mine. They tell me how they are basically having to bankrupt themselves. A neighbor told me they had to sell their forever home just to pay her husband's bills for his dementia care. This is the storm after the storm. A storm of our own making, and out of this strain and stress, we feel alone. It shouldn't have to be this hard.

And on top of this, I feel overwhelmed by a nagging feeling that my new identity as a caregiver is in direct competition with my own identities, that it diminishes and drains what I can provide to my kids as their father, and to others that I love. I can't save for their education like I had planned to. I think of all the costs that we have endured over the years, day care, health care, all the other experiences that I want to provide my kids that I might no longer be able to.

And even if you can afford this, what an anxiety-filled time it is to be raising kids. You can try to keep them off their phones or social media, but it dominates the conversations they have with their friends. You can try to give them the best education, but you look at the future where A.I. dominates and you worry if they will be able to find a job that provides them the stability and security you want for them. And I see a world around us—the wars and the divisiveness—it's so much at times, it feels hard to breathe. And I ask myself a question—what kind of America are my two boys, your kids and your grandkids, going to grow up in? Regardless of the political parties to which we belong, I think we can all agree that a nation this powerful and this extraordinary should not be mired in this level of division. My boys are now 8 and 10. That gives me about 15 years before they're off on their own. And I know actually many of you have told me that it will be much longer than that, because they'll probably move back into my basement after college. But that's my timeline. I've got about 15 years to try and fix this. So, that is why I'm here. That is why I take a seat in the U.S. Senate. I'm a father willing to do everything I humanly can to try to fix this country for my kids and my family.

But I'm worried. I'm worried, because we stand here in this chamber under this ubiquitous grade, e pluribus unum. Centered in the most prominent position in this room. But I ask you, does it ring true? Especially in this divided moment. It often feels that it's more like out of many, many. E Pluribus Multis. I still believe in that phrase. It's a beautiful and telling phrase. But as I've been thinking about it, I realize that there's something missing. How does many turn into one? The phrase, it's missing the verb. How do we actually get from many to one? It doesn't just happen on its own. Now, being the nerd that I am, I dug around and I tracked down the origin of the phrase back to Cicero at the dawn of republics and I found the missing verb. He says, "When each person loves the other as much as himself, it makes one out of many."



The missing verb is to love. But how do we express that to each other? Not just here in this chamber but across this great land. Another way to think about it is when we care for one another as we would care for ourselves. Care is how we manifest love of nation, love of each other, and it is this realization that I've come to, E Pluribus Unum requires love and care. How we become one out of many is to become caregivers to one another, we need give care to this nation, a nation who needs healing, a nation whose future is uncertain and unsteady.

My role as a caretaker has taken on new meaning. My role as a caregiver takes on new meaning. The care with which I transfer my father to his wheelchair and wash his disabled body is but an example of the care with which we must handle our nation in fragile times. And in my new role, I learned that care must flow in all directions, not just those that we feel affinity to. I've not shared this, but my father and I had a difficult relationship over our lives, we've gone through tough times of division and separation. I'd be lying if I told you that being a caregiver to him is easy and flows naturally from a boundless love. It's hard to provide care if it doesn't always feel reciprocal. There are times I feel guilty when I feel trapped. For all the faults that he and I embody, it doesn't diminish responsibility, and I will give him a good and decent life as best that I can provide. I will bring that same sense of responsibility right here into this chamber with a nation divided. I believe that one can and should care for one another, even in the face of division and disagreement just as caregivers have a responsibility to those in their care, we as senators, as Americans have a responsibility to one another as community members, as people, and here in the senate it's where we should exemplify this action of care.

I have seen glimpses of what the Senate can be; this sacred ground that we get the honor to embody. It's not just a place of heated debate and consequential votes; it can be a place of care - it must be a place of care. Not just for those of us in this chamber but for the nation. The chair that you have shown me from the ears with which you have listened to the telling of my troubles, let us pour that out of these doors and give it towards the seven million Americans afflicted with Alzheimer's, the tens of millions more who are families struggling with the struggles of their loved ones. Let our care pour out to the tens of millions of parents who struggle to give their kids the kind of life they want. Let us build a caregiver movement to care for our family and also our nation.

Today in this maiden speech, I make a promise to the people of New Jersey and the people of this country, that for as long as I have to serve here, I will do everything I can to give you the care you deserve. I will care for your parents and grandparents as hard as I will for mine. I will care for your kids and grandkids as much as I care for mine. I will not be perfect, and I will stumble at times, but I've learned as a caregiver I have no other choice but to



endure. Whether it's the emergency calls in the middle of the night or the drop everything moments where I have to rush to the hospital, there is no alternative. As a caregiver, we are the backstop. We here in this chamber need to be that for the ailing nation. We are the backstop. And there are times where it will be, to again quote my father's doctor, "hell", not just for my family but for our country. But there is no greater cause than care. No bigger responsibility exists than the one we have to the people we love and that extends to the nation that we love. And there's no larger obligation that we have as senators, as Americans, to make it easier to look after each other.

This is my maiden speech, and one day I will stand here again to give my farewell speech and the duration between these two speeches will, I hope, not be measured in years but instead by the problems I sought to tackle and solve. That in between these speeches, I hope we meet the urgency and lead our nation forward with strategy and purpose. I've often said that we work in what's arguably the most reactionary building in America, reacting to the headlines, the social posts, but it doesn't have to be this way. Instead, we can be a Senate that sets out real goals and builds the strategy to meet them. Where do we want our nation to be in 10, 20, 30 years from now? I want to be a part of that the Senate - a Senate unafraid to pursue big ideas. I hope in my future farewell speech, I can say that I was part of the Senate that finally delivered universal health care for our nation. A Senate that found a way to provide childcare to every family and long-term care for every senior in need. A Senate that catalyzed the innovation that led to prevent and cure Alzheimer's and other wretched diseases. A Senate that finally gave care to our caregivers who for so long have felt invisible and taken for granted. A Senate that stood up against corruption and restored trust for the American people back into the democracy and governance. A Senate that helped restore American global leadership which shaped a world where peace and prosperity fostered freedom an innovation for everyone. And a Senate that created the kind of America where I can ease my anxiety as a parent as I watch my boys become men.

Colleagues, I ask for your help here because I cannot do this alone. None of us have this power alone. And the nation is looking to us right now to right the ship and give a vision that we can be proud of. To my staff, I promise you that this will be a noble journey you will be proud to be a part of. I know this will be hard and could very well fall short of our lofty goals, but I want no regret in my time here in this sacred chamber that I can say I did everything I could, that I have no regrets about the time I spent here, being a caregiver to our great nation, to make one out of many. I'm ready. Let's get to work.

And, with that, I yield back.

Andy Kim
SENATOR