

# **Durbin, Casey reintroduce bill to support congenital heart defect research**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Bob Casey (D-PA) reintroduced legislation to promote federal research on congenital heart defects (CHD) and raise awareness of the impact these health problems have throughout patients’ lives. The *Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act* also helps states collect data on the prevalence of CHD and understand trends and disparities among those living with CHD.

Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Adam Schiff (D-CA) introduced its companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

“Every 15 minutes in America, a baby is born with a congenital heart defect. For those fortunate enough to catch and treat it early, this diagnosis still means a lifetime of expensive, specialized medical care,” said Senator Durbin. “The Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act will coordinate congenital heart disease research across our federal agencies in order to improve health outcomes, reduce medical costs, and give children and adults living with congenital heart defects hope for their future.”

“Far too many vulnerable children are born with congenital heart defects. While we have made significant progress in improving these children’s lives, we still have much to do to learn how to provide the best care possible for these individuals throughout their lives. Our nation has an abiding obligation to support research into these medical conditions,” Senator Casey said. “This legislation is a bipartisan approach that has the potential to improve survival rates. We owe it to the children and adults living with congenital heart defects to do all we can to address their medical needs.”

Durbin first introduced the Congenital Heart Futures Act in 2009 with Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Representatives Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) and Zack Space (D-OH). The bill was included in the *Affordable Care Act*.

The *Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act* is supported by the Pediatric Congenital Heart Association, Adult Congenital Heart Association, and American Heart Association.

Heart defects are the most common and deadliest form of birth defects, with one in twenty children not living to see their first birthday. Early detection of congenital heart defects can be lifesaving. Thanks to significant strides in medical treatment, an estimated 80 percent of youth with CHD now survive at least 20 years. However, as they age, some patients face additional health challenges, including an increased risk of disability and premature death. There are approximately one million children and 1.4 million adults in the United States living with CHD.