118TH CONGRESS 1ST SESSION S.

To amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to provide for greater spousal protection under defined contribution plans, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Ms. BALDWIN (for herself, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. CANTWELL, Ms. CORTEZ MASTO, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Ms. HIRONO, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Ms. SMITH, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. WARREN, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. CASEY, Mr. KAINE, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. WYDEN, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on ______

A BILL

- To amend the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 to provide for greater spousal protection under defined contribution plans, and for other purposes.
 - 1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-
 - 2 tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

3 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

- 4 This Act may be cited as the "Women's Retirement
- 5 Protection Act".

6 SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

7 Congress finds the following:

 $\mathbf{2}$

(1) Approximately 25 percent of non-retired
 adults have no defined benefit plan or retirement
 savings, according to 2021 data from the Board of
 Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

5 (2) In 2021, approximately one-third of the pri6 vate sector workforce did not have access to a retire7 ment plan at the workplace, and only half of the
8 workforce actually participated in a retirement plan.

9 (3) Women's retirement preparedness often lags 10 significantly behind their male counterparts', result-11 ing in the median income for women aged 65 and 12 older in 2022 being just 83 percent of the median 13 income of men aged 65 and older, including income 14 from social security, pension plans, investments, and 15 earnings.

16 (4) Women aged 80 and older had the highest
17 poverty rate among older persons in all age groups,
18 with 14.7 percent of women aged 80 and older living
19 in poverty while 10.3 percent of men in the same
20 age group live in poverty.

(5) Women make up two-thirds of low-wage
workers, even though they comprise less than half of
all workers, and low-wage workers are less likely
than other workers to participate in a retirement
plan at work.

(6) Because of the pay gap, women working
 full-time, year-round typically lose \$398,160 over a
 40-year career thereby requiring the average woman
 to work almost a decade longer than her male coun terpart to make up that career wage gap.

6 (7) Due to the lower lifetime wages stemming
7 from unequal pay and caregiving duties, the average
8 Social Security benefit in 2021 for a woman was
9 \$1,484 a month, while for men such average month10 ly benefit was \$1,838.

(8) While the SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 (Public Law 117–328) will go a long way to address this
coverage gap, just 1 in 5 part-time workers who
work a full year are eligible for a retirement plan,
and women are almost twice as likely to work parttime as men.

(9) While traditional defined benefit retirement
plans have spousal protections, defined contribution
retirement plans, which have become increasingly
common, currently provide no similar spousal protections.

(10) The Thrift Savings Plan of the Federal
Government, the largest defined contribution plan in
the world with approximately 6,500,000 partici-

	_
1	pants, requires its married participants to have their
2	spouses consent for withdrawals and loans.
3	(11) There were almost 700,000 divorces in the
4	United States between 2020 and 2021. After the
5	family home, retirement savings tends to be the larg-
6	est asset to be divided in a divorce.
7	(12) While fees and expenses associated with
8	retirement plans have been in decline, participants
9	have seen direct charges for processing qualified do-
10	mestic relations orders increase significantly.
11	SEC. 3. INCREASING SPOUSAL PROTECTION UNDER DE-
12	FINED CONTRIBUTION PLANS.
13	(a) Amendment of Employee Retirement In-
14	COME SECURITY ACT OF 1974.—
15	(1) IN GENERAL.—Part 2 of subtitle B of title
16	I of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act
17	of 1974 (29 U.S.C. 1051 et seq.) is amended by in-
18	serting after section 205 the following new section:
19	"SEC. 205A. ADDITIONAL SPOUSAL CONSENT REQUIRE-
20	MENTS.
21	"(a) IN GENERAL.—Each individual account plan to
22	which section 205 does not apply shall provide that, except
23	as provided in subsections (c) and (d), no distribution may
24	be made under the plan unless the spousal consent re-
25	quirements of subsection (e) are met.

"(b) COORDINATION WITH SECTION 205.—Nothing
 in this section shall be construed to exempt an individual
 account plan from the requirements of paragraph (1)(B),
 (1)(C), or (2) of section 205(b) with respect to any partici pant.

6 "(c) EXCEPTIONS FOR CERTAIN DISTRIBUTIONS.—
7 Subsection (a) shall not apply to—

8 "(1) any distribution that is—

9 "(A) a minimum required distribution de10 scribed in section 4974(b) of the Internal Rev11 enue Code of 1986; or

"(B) permitted under section 203(e)(1) to
be made without the consent of the participant;
"(2) a distribution that is in an amount that is
less than 25 percent of the account balance, provided that such a distribution shall be permitted
under this paragraph only one time per account;

"(3) any distribution in the form of a qualified
joint and survivor annuity (as defined in section
20 205(d)(1)), a qualified optional survivor annuity (as
defined in section 205(d)(2)), a qualified preretirement survivor annuity (as defined in section 205(e)),
or a series of substantially equal periodic payments
(not less frequently than annually) made for the

joint lives (or life expectancies) of the participant
 and the participant's spouse; or

"(4) in the case of a participant who does not 3 4 elect a form of benefit described in paragraph (3) 5 under the plan or who is participating in a plan that 6 does not provide such a form of benefit, any dis-7 tribution of the participant's entire nonforfeitable 8 accrued benefit if 50 percent of such accrued benefit 9 is transferred to an individual retirement plan (as 10 defined in section 7701(a)(37) of the Internal Rev-11 enue Code of 1986) of the spouse of the participant. 12 A transfer described in paragraph (4) to an individual re-13 tirement plan shall be treated in the same manner as a transfer under section 408(d)(6) of the Internal Revenue 14 15 Code of 1986.

16 "(d) EXCEPTIONS FOR CERTAIN ROLLOVER CON-17 TRIBUTIONS.—Subsection (a) shall not apply to any dis-18 tribution, involving a participant who has a spouse, that is an eligible rollover distribution (as defined in section 19 20 402(f)(2)(A) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986) made 21 in the form of a direct trustee-to-trustee transfer within 22 the meaning of section 401(a)(31) of the Internal Revenue 23 Code of 1986—

24 "(1) to a plan to which this section or section25 205 applies; or

	·
1	((2) to an individual retirement plan (as de-
2	fined in section $7701(a)(37)$ of the Internal Revenue
3	Code of 1986) if—
4	"(A) the beneficiary of such plan is the
5	spouse of the participant, or the spousal con-
6	sent requirements of subsection (e) are met
7	with respect to any designation of 1 or more
8	other beneficiaries; and
9	"(B) under the terms of the individual re-
10	tirement plan, the beneficiary of such plan
11	(whether the spouse or other beneficiary des-
12	ignated under paragraph (1)) may not be
13	changed unless—
14	"(i) the spousal consent requirements
15	of subsection (e) are met with respect to
16	any such change, or
17	"(ii) the spousal consent under sub-
18	paragraph (A) to the designation of a ben-
19	eficiary other than the spouse expressly
20	permits such designation to be changed
21	without the further consent of the spouse.
22	"(e) Spousal Consent Requirements.—
23	"(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of this sec-
24	tion, except as provided in paragraph (2), the spous-
25	al consent requirements of this subsection are met

1	with respect to any distribution or any designation
2	or change of beneficiary if—
3	"(A) the plan provides to each participant,
4	within a reasonable period of time before such
5	distribution or designation or change of bene-
6	ficiary is made and consistent with such regula-
7	tions as the Secretary of the Treasury may pre-
8	scribe, a written explanation of the rights of the
9	participant and the participant's spouse under
10	this section;
11	"(B) the spouse of the participant consents
12	in writing to the distribution or designation or
13	change of beneficiary;
14	"(C) in the case of a distribution, the writ-
15	ten consent under subparagraph (B) is made
16	during the consent period; and
17	"(D) the written consent under subpara-
18	graph (B)—
19	"(i) acknowledges the effect of such
20	distribution or designation or change of
21	beneficiary; and
22	"(ii) is witnessed by a plan represent-
23	ative or a notary public.
24	"(2) Exceptions under section $205(C)(2)(B)$
25	TO APPLY.—The requirements of paragraph (1)

	Ŭ
1	(other than subparagraph (A) thereof) shall not
2	apply with respect to any distribution or designation
3	or change of beneficiary if a participant establishes
4	to the satisfaction of the plan administrator that—
5	"(A) there is no spouse;
6	"(B) the participant and the participant's
7	spouse have not been married for at least 1
8	year as of the date of the distribution or des-
9	ignation or change of beneficiary; or
10	"(C) such consent cannot be obtained be-
11	cause—
12	"(i) the spouse cannot be located; or
13	"(ii) of such other circumstances as
14	the Secretary of the Treasury, in consulta-
15	tion with the Secretary of Labor, may by
16	regulations prescribe.
17	"(3) Consent limited to spouse and
18	EVENT.—Any written consent by a spouse under
19	paragraph (1), or the establishment by a participant
20	that an exception under paragraph (2) applies with
21	respect to a spouse, shall be effective only with re-
22	spect to that spouse and to the distribution or des-
23	ignation or change of beneficiary to which it relates.

1	"(4) Consent period.—For purposes of this
2	subsection, the term 'consent period' means, with re-
3	spect to any distribution—
4	"(A) the 90-day period immediately pre-
5	ceding the date of such distribution; or
6	"(B) such other period as the Secretary of
7	the Treasury may provide.
8	"(f) Discharge of Plan From Liability.—Rules
9	similar to the rules of section $205(c)(6)$ shall apply for
10	purposes of this section.".
11	(2) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of sec-
12	tions of part 2 of subtitle B of title I of the Em-
13	ployee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 is
14	amended by inserting after the item relating to sec-
15	tion 205 the following new item:
	"Sec. 205A. Additional spousal consent requirements.".
16	(3) Right of action.—Section 502(a) of the
17	Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974
18	(29 U.S.C. 1132) is amended—
19	(A) by striking "or" at the end of para-
20	graph $(10);$
21	(B) by striking the period at the end of
22	paragraph (11) and inserting "; or"; and
23	(C) by adding at the end the following new
24	paragraph:

"(12) by an individual for appropriate relief in
 the case of a violation of the individual's rights
 under section 205A.".

4 (4) PARALLEL AMENDMENT TO SECTION 205.— 5 Section 205(c)(2)(B) of the Employee Retirement 6 Income Security Act of 1974 (29)U.S.C. 7 1055(c)(2)(B) is amended by inserting ", because 8 due to exceptional circumstances requiring the par-9 ticipant to seek the spouse's consent would be inap-10 propriate" after "located".

(b) CONFORMING AMENDMENT TO INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1986.—Section 401(a) of the Internal
Revenue Code of 1986 is amended by inserting after paragraph (17) the following new paragraph:

15 "(18) ADDITIONAL SPOUSAL CONSENT RE16 QUIREMENTS.—

17 "(A) IN GENERAL.—In the case of a de-18 fined contribution plan to which paragraph (11) 19 does not apply, except as provided in sub-20 sections (c) and (d), a trust forming part of 21 such plan shall not constitute a qualified trust 22 under this section unless no distribution may be 23 made under the plan unless the spousal consent 24 requirements of subparagraph (E) are met.

	12
1	"(B) COORDINATION WITH PARAGRAPH
2	(11).—Nothing in this paragraph shall be con-
3	strued to exempt a defined contribution plan
4	from the requirements of subparagraph (B)(ii),
5	(B)(iii), or (C) of paragraph (11) with respect
6	to any participant.
7	"(C) EXCEPTIONS FOR CERTAIN DISTRIBU-
8	TIONS.—Subparagraph (A) shall not apply to—
9	"(i) any distribution that is—
10	"(I) a minimum required dis-
11	tribution described in section 4974(b),
12	Oľ
13	"(II) permitted under section
14	411(a)(11) to be made without the
15	consent of the participant,
16	"(ii) a distribution that is in an
17	amount that is less than 25 percent of the
18	account balance, provided that such a dis-
19	tribution shall be permitted under this
20	clause only one time per account,
21	"(ii*i) any distribution in the form of
22	a qualified joint and survivor annuity (as
23	defined in section 417(b)), a qualified op-
24	tional survivor annuity (as defined in sec-
25	tion 417(g)), a qualified preretirement sur-

	10
1	vivor annuity (as defined in section
2	417(c)), or a series of substantially equal
3	periodic payments (not less frequently than
4	annually) made for the joint lives (or life
5	expectancies) of the participant and the
6	participant's spouse, or
7	"(iv) in the case of a participant who
8	does not elect a form of benefit described
9	in clause (iii) under the plan or who is par-
10	ticipating in a plan that does not provide
11	such a form of benefit, any distribution of
12	the participant's entire nonforfeitable ac-
13	crued benefit if 50 percent of such accrued
14	benefit is transferred to an individual re-
15	tirement plan of the spouse of the partici-
16	pant.
17	A transfer described in clause (iv) to an indi-
18	vidual retirement plan shall be treated in the
19	same manner as a transfer under section
20	408(d)(6).
21	"(D) EXCEPTIONS FOR CERTAIN ROLL-
22	OVER CONTRIBUTIONS.—Subparagraph (A)
23	shall not apply to any distribution, involving a
24	participant who has a spouse, that is an eligible
25	rollover distribution (as defined in section

	14
1	402(f)(2)(A)) made in the form of a direct
2	trustee-to-trustee transfer within the meaning
3	of paragraph (31)—
4	"(i) to a plan to which this paragraph
5	or paragraph (11) applies; or
6	"(ii) to an individual retirement plan
7	if—
8	"(I) the beneficiary of such plan
9	is the spouse of the participant, or the
10	spousal consent requirements of sub-
11	paragraph (E) are met with respect to
12	any designation of 1 or more other
13	beneficiaries; and
14	"(II) under the terms of the indi-
15	vidual retirement plan, the beneficiary
16	of such plan (whether the spouse or
17	other beneficiary designated under
18	clause (i)) may not be changed un-
19	less—
20	"(aa) the spousal consent
21	requirements of subparagraph
22	(E) are met with respect to any
23	such change, or
24	"(bb) the spousal consent
25	under subclause (I) to the des-

	10
1	ignation of a beneficiary other
2	than the spouse expressly permits
3	such designation to be changed
4	without the further consent of
5	the spouse.
6	"(E) Spousal consent require-
7	MENTS.—
8	"(i) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of
9	this paragraph, except as provided in
10	clause (ii), the spousal consent require-
11	ments of this subparagraph are met with
12	respect to any distribution or any designa-
13	tion or change of beneficiary if—
14	"(I) the plan provides to each
15	participant, within a reasonable period
16	of time before such distribution or
17	designation or change of beneficiary is
18	made and consistent with such regula-
19	tions as the Secretary may prescribe,
20	a written explanation of the rights of
21	the participant and the participant's
22	spouse under this paragraph,
23	"(II) the spouse of the partici-
24	pant consents in writing to the dis-

1	tribution or designation or change of
2	beneficiary,
3	"(III) in the case of a distribu-
4	tion, the written consent under sub-
5	clause (II) is made during the consent
6	period, and
7	"(IV) the written consent under
8	subclause (ii)—
9	"(aa) acknowledges the ef-
10	fect of such distribution or des-
11	ignation or change of beneficiary,
12	and
13	"(bb) is witnessed by a plan
14	representative or a notary public.
15	"(ii) Exceptions under section
16	417(A)(2)(B) TO APPLY.—The requirements
17	of clause (i) (other than subclause (I)
18	thereof) shall not apply with respect to any
19	distribution or designation or change of
20	beneficiary if a participant establishes to
21	the satisfaction of the plan administrator
22	that—
23	"(I) there is no spouse,
24	"(II) the participant and the par-
25	ticipant's spouse have not been mar-

	11
1	ried for at least 1 year as of the date
2	of the distribution or designation or
3	change of beneficiary, or
4	"(III) such consent cannot be ob-
5	tained because—
6	"(aa) the spouse cannot be
7	located, or
8	"(bb) of such other cir-
9	cumstances as the Secretary, in
10	consultation with the Secretary
11	of Labor, may by regulations pre-
12	scribe.
13	"(iii) Consent limited to spouse
14	and event.—Any written consent by a
15	spouse under clause (i), or the establish-
16	ment by a participant that an exception
17	under clause (ii) applies with respect to a
18	spouse, shall be effective only with respect
19	to that spouse and to the distribution or
20	designation or change of beneficiary to
21	which it relates.
22	"(iv) Consent period.—For pur-
23	poses of this subparagraph, the term 'con-
24	sent period' means, with respect to any
25	distribution—

"(I) the 90-day period imme-1 2 diately preceding the date of such dis-3 tribution, or 4 "(II) such other period as the 5 Secretary may provide.". 6 SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATES. 7 (a) INCREASING SPOUSAL PROTECTION UNDER DE-8 FINED CONTRIBUTION PLANS.—Except as provided in 9 subsection (b), the amendments made by section 3 shall 10 apply to distributions and rollover contributions made in plan years beginning after the date that is 1 year after 11 the date of the enactment of this Act. 12 13 (b) **PROVISIONS RELATING** TO PLAN AMEND-14 MENTS.— 15 (1) IN GENERAL.—If this paragraph applies to 16 any plan or contract amendment, such plan or con-17 tract shall be treated as being operated in accord-18 ance with the terms of the plan during the period 19 described in paragraph (2)(C). 20 (2) AMENDMENTS TO WHICH PARAGRAPH (1) 21 APPLIES.— 22 (A) IN GENERAL.—Paragraph (1) shall 23 apply to any amendment to any plan or annuity

24 contract which is made—

1	(i) pursuant to the amendments made
2	by section 3 or pursuant to any regulation
3	issued under either such section; and
4	(ii) on or before the last day of the
5	first plan year beginning on or after the
6	date that is 3 years after the applicable
7	day described in subsection $(c)(1)(B)$.
8	In the case of a governmental plan (as defined
9	in section 414(d) of the Internal Revenue Code
10	of 1986), this subparagraph shall be applied by
11	substituting "5 years" for "3 years" in clause
12	(ii).
13	(B) CONDITIONS.—Subparagraph (A) shall
14	not apply to any amendment unless—
15	(i) the plan or contract is operated as
16	if such plan or contract amendment were
17	in effect for the period described in sub-
18	paragraph (C); and
19	(ii) such plan or contract amendment
20	applies retroactively for such period.
21	(C) PERIOD DESCRIBED.—The period de-
22	scribed in this subparagraph is the period—
23	(i) beginning on the effective date
24	specified by the plan; and

TAM23E24 KHK

	20
1	(ii) ending on the date described in
2	subparagraph (A)(ii) (or, if earlier, the
3	date the plan or contract amendment is
4	adopted).
5	SEC. 5. ACCESS TO INDEPENDENT CONSUMER INFORMA-
6	TION AND UNDERSTANDING.
7	(a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section—
8	(1) the term "consumer" means any person
9	who purchases or acquires any goods, products, serv-
10	ices, or credit related to the retirement or later life
11	economic security of the consumer; and
12	(2) the term "financial product or service pro-
13	vider" means any person who engages in the busi-
14	ness of providing any retirement financial product or
15	service to any consumer.
16	(b) Required Link to Consumer Awareness In-
17	FORMATION.—In any offer for the sale, exchange, or other
18	transfer of a retirement financial product or service to a
19	consumer carried out by a financial product or service pro-
20	vider, such provider shall provide, in a manner consistent
21	with subsection (c), an easily accessible link to the website
22	of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection (referred
23	to in this section as the "CFPB") at which the consumer
24	may access information, literature, guides, programs,
25	tools, strategies, or any other resource produced by the

TAM23E24 KHK

21

CFPB or other Federal agency relating to retirement
 planning or later life economic security.

3 (c) DETERMINATION.—In order to ensure that the re-4 quirement under subsection (b) is effectively carried out, 5 the Financial Literacy and Education Commission shall determine and publish on its website the appropriate link 6 7 to the CFPB's website for access to the CFPB's and other 8 Federal agencies' consumer education materials, the pre-9 ferred format of such link, and any accompanying descrip-10 tion of the CFPB and the consumer education materials 11 associated with such link.

12 SEC. 6. GRANTS TO PROMOTE FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR 13 WOMEN.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF GRANT AWARDS.—The Secretary of Labor, acting through the Director of the Women's Bureau, shall award grants on a competitive basis to
eligible entities to enable such entities to improve the financial literacy of women who are working age or in retirement, to increase the likelihood of the women realizing
a secure and stable retirement.

(b) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—In this section, the term "eligible entity" means a community-based
organization with proven experience and expertise in serving working-age or retired women.

1 (c) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity that desires to 2 receive a grant under this section shall submit an applica-3 tion to the Secretary of Labor at such time, in such man-4 ner, and accompanied by such information as such Sec-5 retary may require.

6 (d) MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.—The Secretary of
7 Labor shall award grants under this section in amounts
8 of not less than \$250,000.

9 (e) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives 10 a grant under this section shall use the grant funds to 11 develop and implement financial literacy education, and 12 related activities including outreach, awareness building, 13 and counseling to increase women's knowledge of retire-14 ment planning and consumer, economic, and personal fi-15 nancial concepts.

(f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
\$100,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each succeeding
fiscal year.

20 SEC. 7. GRANTS TO ASSIST LOW-INCOME WOMEN AND SUR21 VIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN OBTAIN22 ING QUALIFIED DOMESTIC RELATIONS OR23 DERS.

(a) AUTHORIZATION OF GRANT AWARDS.—The Sec-retary of Labor, acting through the Director of the Wom-

TAM23E24 KHK

23

1 en's Bureau and in conjunction with the Assistant Sec-2 retary of the Employee Benefits Security Administration, 3 shall award grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible enti-4 ties to enable such entities to assist low-income women 5 and survivors of domestic violence in obtaining qualified domestic relations orders and ensuring that those women 6 7 actually obtain the benefits to which they are entitled 8 through those orders.

9 (b) DEFINITION OF ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—In this sec-10 tion, the term "eligible entity" means a community-based 11 organization with proven experience and expertise in serv-12 ing women and the financial and retirement needs of 13 women.

(c) APPLICATION.—An eligible entity that desires to
receive a grant under this section shall submit an application to the Secretary of Labor at such time, in such manner, and accompanied by such information as the Secretary of Labor may require.

(d) MINIMUM GRANT AMOUNT.—The Secretary of
20 Labor shall award grants under this section in amounts
21 of not less than \$250,000.

(e) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives
a grant under this section shall use the grant funds to
develop programs to offer help to low-income women or
survivors of domestic violence who need assistance in pre-

paring, obtaining, and effectuating a qualified domestic re lations order.

3 (f) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
4 authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section
5 \$100,000,000 for fiscal year 2024 and each succeeding
6 fiscal year.