November 19, 2025

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
Chairman of the Senate Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions Committee
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Ranking Member of the Senate Health,
Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee
322 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Senate HELP Committee Hearing: *The Future of Retirement*

Dear Chairman Cassidy and Ranking Member Sanders:

On behalf of the SPARK Institute, we appreciate your holding an important hearing on *The Future of Retirement* and we value the opportunity to share our views on a range of issues related to our retirement savings system.

The SPARK Institute believes that retirement security is the shared responsibly of individuals, employers, government, and the providers, consultants, and advisors who serve them. We represent the interests of a broad-based cross section of retirement plan service providers and investment managers, including banks, mutual fund companies, insurance companies, third-party administrators, trade clearing firms and benefits consultants. Collectively, our members serve more than 110 million employer-sponsored plan participants.

SECURE 2.0: *An Ongoing Success*

Following the passage of the SECURE Act, the HELP Committee's active engagement resulted in the swift passage of SECURE 2.0 Act which was a tremendous package of retirement saving reforms and provisions to modernize retirement savings plans. SECURE 2.0 has been a success. The SPARK Institute is grateful for the efforts of the HELP Committee and its members to advance these important provisions. Since its enactment at the end of 2022, the SPARK Institute and our members have been actively working to implement SECURE 2.0. and its various provisions to expand access and enhance the retirement savings of millions of Americans. The SPARK Institute looks forward to continued partnership with the HELP Committee to advance additional modernizations.

The Auto Reenrollment Act: *Common Sense Modernization*

One sensible and bipartisan modernization that the SPARK Institute has long supported is the Auto Reenroll Act of 2025 (S. 1831). The Auto Reenrollment Act introduced by Senator Tim Kaine and Chairman Cassidy builds on the bipartisan SECURE 2.0 and would further improve, simplify, and modernize retirement savings. SPARK is pleased to endorse this bill to encourage employers to adopt an automatic reenrollment design feature in their retirement plan.

Automatic plan features have proven to be powerful tools to improve retirement readiness, and we expect that greater adoption of automatic reenrollment will benefit employees who initially chose not to participate in their employer's plan. Automatic reenrollment also further advances a key component of the SPARK Institute's Legislative and Regulatory Agenda to simplify and modernize the rules for retirement plans.

Retirement Investment Options: ***Innovation to Expand Access to Private Markets***

As we look at the future of retirement savings, we know Congress and the Administration are looking at issues related to 401(k) and other defined contribution retirement savings plans having greater access to private markets. A key component of the incredible success of the American retirement system – with nearly $30 trillion saved in in defined contribution plans and IRAs – is the ongoing innovation to help bring people into the retirement savings system and provide them with investment options that help them achieve a secure retirement.

SPARK members have been on the front lines of working with retirement plan sponsors and investment managers to continue the innovation of products and services. These ongoing innovations will provide retirement savers with the most robust set of investment options to help them meet their long-term goals.

In that regard, while there is currently limited adoption of retirement plan investment options with private market components, we do see a growing interest from retirement plan sponsors and employees. Defined benefit plans have invested in private market investments for many years, and our members are working to explore ways to bring those investments to defined contribution plans. SPARK members and their partners have been active in efforts to further integrate private market investments as components of broader retirement plan investment options such as target date funds and CITs. Ensuring a stable legislative and regulatory framework that allows for continued retirement plan product innovation will be essential in this ongoing effort.

SPARK looks forward to working with the Congress and the Administration to ensure that retirement savers continue to benefit from innovation that offers investment options that will help them achieve a secure retirement, while maintaining the appropriate safeguards to protect participants.

The Retirement Fairness for Charities & Educational Institutions Act: ***Finishing the Job***

While not in the jurisdiction of the HELP Committee, we did want to reiterate our support for finishing the job started in SECURE 2.0 to provide investment parity for 403(b) plans. The SPARK Institute has long supported the Retirement Fairness for Charities and Educational Institutions Act (S 424). Our members believe strongly that the bipartisan legislation is essential to increase access for retirement savers in 403(b) plans by expanding the investment options that are permitted.

The Retirement Fairness for Charities and Educational Institutions Act builds on the bipartisan work Congress initiated in the SECURE 2.0 Act of 2022 to improve, simplify, and modernize retirement savings. The legislation provides the needed security exemptions to fully realize the ability of 403(b) plans to invest in collective investment trusts (CITs) and unregistered insurance company separate accounts. The bill will provide full investment parity across all retirement plan types. The millions of teachers and charity workers saving for retirement in 403(b) have long been denied investment parity and this legislation would correct for that historical anomaly.

We thank you again for holding this timely hearing on the future of retirement and greatly appreciate your interest in these important retirement security issues. As the Committee continues to explore these and other proposals, we look forward to working with you to help all retirement savers achieve a financially secure retirement.

Sincerely,

Tim Rouse
Executive Director
The SPARK Institute, Inc.