

**Statement by Senator Susan M. Collins**  
**HAVANA Act**  
**May 19, 2021**

I rise today to introduce the Helping American Victims Afflicted by Neurological Attacks Act, the HAVANA Act. Our bill would provide assistance to the employees of the intelligence community and other federal agencies who have suffered from traumatic brain injuries at the hands of our foreign adversaries.

I'm joined today by a bipartisan group of co-sponsors, including Senators Warner and Rubio—the Chairman and Vice Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee—Senators Shaheen, Cornyn, Bennett, Burr, Gillibrand, Blunt, Heinrich, Sasse, Feinstein, Cotton, King, and Risch. Most of those are members of the Intelligence Committee, and they share my deep concern and my determination to get to the bottom of what has happened to these brave men and women who have been attacked.

For many years, American personnel serving in Cuba, China, and elsewhere have experienced unexplained serious medical harm, including in some cases permanent brain injuries. These conditions are believed to be connected to a mysterious direct energy weapon used by those who are our adversaries. As we investigate the source of previous attacks and seek to prevent future ones, the bill that I'm introducing today would provide additional financial assistance to Americans who were injured and who continue to experience debilitating symptoms. Too many of the victims have had to fight to get the medical care that they need for their injuries. This is completely unacceptable.

Last year, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine released a report on the more than 40 American diplomats at the U.S. embassy in Havana, Cuba, and at least a dozen American diplomats at the U.S. consulate in Guangzhou, China, who suffered symptoms, "consistent with the effects of directed pulse radio frequency energy." And just this month, the *New York Times* reported that the number of American personnel who have fallen ill under these mystifying circumstances is much higher, possibly more than 130 cases. Now we are even hearing reports of cases occurring within the United States.

The injuries that many of these victims have endured are significant and life altering. These attacks have left Americans serving our country with damage that ranges in severity, but can include reduced balance, eyesight, and hearing. Some have severe permanent headaches. Others have brain injuries that have resulted in reduced cognitive function. Many of them can no longer perform their jobs and they have been forced to medically retire. To make matters worse, some of the victims did not receive the financial and medical support they should have expected from their government when they first reported their injuries. This is an outrageous failure on the part of our government to care for those who serve.

Our bill would give additional authority to the CIA Director and to the Secretary of State to provide financial support to these Americans who experience traumatic brain injuries from attacks that occur while serving our country. Due to limitations in the current law, several victims suffering from cognitive impairment are not receiving all of the medical care and other

assistance that they need to cope with the impacts of their injuries. The authorities provided in the HAVANA Act will help to rectify this problem.

I have spoken personally with some of the victims of these heinous attacks. This is a group that unfortunately is growing in number. To those victims, I want to pledge to them today that along with the co-sponsors of our bill, I am totally committed to making sure that our government finds out who is responsible for these devastating attacks. And I further pledge to the victims that you will receive the financial support and medical care that you deserve.

I have spoken several times to CIA Director Burns about these attacks, and I am heartened by his commitment and his attitude. He has made commitments to the Senate Intelligence Committee, as has the Director of National Intelligence, to care for these victims, and to get to the bottom of these attacks. We need a whole-of-government approach to identify the heartless adversary who is targeting, deliberately targeting, American personnel.

The public servants who work in our embassies and consulates, and in other locations overseas, make many personal sacrifices to represent America's interests. They deserve our strong support when they are harmed in the line of duty, just as we care for soldiers who are injured on the battlefield. I hope all of my colleagues will join us in supporting this vital legislation.