

my husband was diagnosed. Eventually I left the workforce to care for him . . . and, of course, lost my employer-provided health insurance at the same time. The ACA has provided me with options ever since then; options that I never had before its passage. In 2014 I had three joints replaced; life changing surgeries that restored my active lifestyle and removed chronic pain from my life. These were only possible because I was able to access health insurance as an individual, at a reasonable cost."

The Republican plan for increasing costs for older Americans threatens people just like Elisabeth.

These stories matter. These lives matter. We must all keep them in mind as we look to change the Affordable Care Act.

OPPOSE BILL REFORMING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. BERA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERA. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to urge all of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to oppose this bill that repeals the Affordable Care Act, and here is why.

I stand here not as a Member of Congress, but as a doctor. When I took the oath to enter medicine, like thousands of other doctors, there are really three basic ethics in there:

Benevolence: to do good.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not do anything good. It makes it harder for people to get health care.

The second ethic was non-maleficance: to do no harm.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is going to harm millions of Americans. It is going to pull healthcare coverage away from folks. In fact, I have heard from folks who have come to my townhalls and have talked about how the Affordable Care Act has saved their lives. If you pull health care away from them, people are going to get sicker, and some people may potentially die.

And the third ethic is patient autonomy: the ability of patients to make the choices that impact their lives.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not empower patients to make their own choices. This bill limits those choices. It takes choice away from them.

This is a bad bill that goes against everything that we in the medical profession swear to when we enter the profession. That is why you see doctors standing up and opposing this bill, hospitals opposing this bill, and health plans opposing this bill. That is why, when patients see what is in this bill, you will see American patients pushing back.

If you thought the townhalls have been boisterous over the last few months, just try to pass this bill and take necessary health care away from folks. You are going to see those patients showing up in your townhalls.

Let's talk about some of the good things that have happened in the Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act expanded and made coverage for birth control much more readily available. That is a good thing. Whether you are anti-choice or pro-choice, like I am, it is a good thing. What we have seen by expanding coverage to birth control is the number of unintended pregnancies are near all-time lows. That is what we ought to be doing.

The Affordable Care Act expanded access to preventive health services. We know if we want to bring down the cost of health care, let's diagnose the cancer early. Let's treat it and let's save that life. Let's better manage disease.

Let's not go back to the old days where the patient showed up with the heart attack and then we went into action. That costs us a lot more. Let's prevent that heart attack. Let's provide better access to care.

Mr. Speaker, let's not make the President have to renege on a promise that he made. On the campaign trail and after being inaugurated, the President has said that any healthcare legislation was going to expand coverage, it was going to be cheaper, and it was going to be more accessible to patients.

We know this bill that is being introduced does none of that. It cuts coverage. It is going to be more costly for people and fewer people are going to get it.

Mr. Speaker, don't make the President have to renege and go against the promise that he made. The American public is going to hold him accountable for that.

Mr. Speaker, do the right thing. Let's put American patients first. That is what we as doctors do every day, and that is why, again, doctors are against it, hospitals are against it, and health plans are against it.

Mr. Speaker, let's reject this bill. I urge all my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to stand against this bill. It is a bad bill.

DESTABILIZING OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DELBENE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, last night, House Republicans released a dangerous and irresponsible bill that threatens to destabilize our Nation's healthcare system and rob millions of Americans of their health insurance plans.

Since coming to Congress, I have worked tirelessly to find commonsense fixes to our Nation's healthcare laws. We should be working together to build upon the reforms we have already made to expand coverage and reduce costs. But what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have put forward would make working families, seniors, children, and people with disabilities foot the bill for their poorly conceived experiment.

What is worse, they are giving our constituents and their Representatives in Congress less than 48 hours to review it before jamming it through committees.

As a former businesswoman and entrepreneur, I am always stunned to see leaders in Congress put forward a half-baked plan like this—one that threatens massive disruption and chaos, released in the middle of the night without any data or metrics to show how it makes literally anything better. In the private sector, that is the sort of behavior that can get you fired.

For a moment, let's put aside the fact that committees are planning to mark up this legislation tomorrow without any data from the Congressional Budget Office on how many of our constituents can expect to lose health coverage or see their taxes go up. Let's talk about the one thing we do know: this bill is an enormous tax cut for the wealthiest Americans.

Through this bill, Republicans are trying to give an average tax cut of around \$7 million to the 400 highest-income households—a tax cut they don't need and didn't ask for. They are doing it while ripping health insurance away from millions of hardworking Americans; forcing seniors to pay a staggering \$3,200 more on premiums every year, for less coverage; increasing the cost of prescription drugs for middle class families; eliminating coverage for women's health care, like birth control, breast cancer screenings, and maternity care; and decimating the Medicaid program for 62 million children and families, seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities.

This is hardly what I would call a great deal or a better way for the middle class, which is what the American people were repeatedly promised by President Trump and Speaker RYAN.

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No, their idea of a healthcare plan is a tax cut for the wealthy at the expense of everyone else. When our healthcare system falls apart, we will all pay the price.

My in-box has been flooded with phone calls, emails, and letters from constituents who are terrified about what the Republicans are trying to do. Like Stacie, from Snoqualmie, who got coverage under the Washington State exchange after spending years struggling to pay for health care. She recently wrote to me and said: "Just last week I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I am terrified—not as much by the cancer, but by the thought that we might not be able to pay for health insurance."

This bill spells disaster for people like Stacie. As her representative in Congress, I will not stand for it. I will fight every day to protect the reforms that have made health insurance accessible and affordable for her. We can't go back to a time when getting sick meant going bankrupt, and that is exactly what this legislation would do.

HOW LONG?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. DEMINGS) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. DEMINGS. Mr. Speaker, my father, James LeRoy Butler, worked as a janitor. He had a fifth grade education, and now his youngest child is a Member of the 115th Congress. My father worked hard, and his word was his bond.

On January 15, 2017, President Trump promised insurance for everyone. He also promised Americans would have much lower deductibles. On January 22, 2017, President Trump's administration promised no one would lose healthcare coverage. But after only a glimpse of his plan, we now know these promises are not true, like so many other things that the White House has said.

The people who need coverage the most, the people depending on the President the most, the middle class, working families, and the working poor will be left behind under this plan. In my district alone in Florida, over 66,400 people stand to lose healthcare coverage.

To my Republican colleagues, I ask: How long will we endure empty promises and made-up stories coming out of the White House? How long? I call on the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, delivered in 1965, when he marched from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, and he asked this question: "How long? Not long, because no lie can live forever."

How long? Mexico will pay for the wall. I will release my tax returns. Discriminatory travel bans. Hidden ties with our enemy Russia. How long? Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to please hold President Trump accountable and do what you know in your hearts is right. Demand answers and allow the facts to lead you to justice. How long?

THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT REPLACEMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, the Republicans released a bill last night. That bill deals with every American's welfare—every American's welfare—every child's welfare in this country. None of them were able to testify before the committee, before the committee marks it up on Wednesday. None of them were able to come to that committee and say how it will affect them or their families or their fellow citizens. None of them were able to testify as to the benefits of the Affordable Care Act for them, their families, their children, and their neighbors. None of them will have been able to read and digest the bill.

Mr. Speaker, last night, after locking it away in a basement for days, and just as reporters were leaving to go home, Republicans released the text of their legislation to repeal the Afford-

able Care Act. The country has been waiting for 7 years for the Republican replacement, for the Republican alternative, for the Republicans to redeem their promise of a better plan, a better way to ensure the security of having health care that is affordable and available to each American and to their families and their children.

Republicans have been promising, since the enactment of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, that they would repeal it entirely and enact something better. They don't repeal it entirely, and they don't offer something better, something that covers more Americans and lowers costs to consumers. For 7 years, they have said we have a better plan. Last night, they revealed the inaccuracy of that representation; the bait-and-switch, if you will, of that representation; the pretense to their conservatives who have voted some 65 times to repeal the Affordable Care Act that they were not going to offer a bill that did that, notwithstanding the fact that they said that is what they are going to do.

The legislation they introduced would repeal, of course, some parts of the Affordable Care Act and replace them with policies that will take health coverage away, take health care away from millions of Americans and make millions of others pay more for less.

President Trump, just the other day from that rostrum, promised the American people that the Republican plan would "have insurance for everybody." That was not true. Neither the House Republicans nor the Senate Republicans nor President Trump have offered such a plan, and the plan that was revealed last night does not fulfill that representation.

Mr. Speaker, it should not surprise us, however, that our President says things that prove to be not accurate. He also said from that rostrum that the policies would be far less expensive and far better than they are now. This bill does not do that, and the President has offered no bill that does that.

This plan fails that representation miserably. It increases healthcare costs for middle class families in order to pay for tax breaks for the wealthiest, who don't need them to afford health care. We should not penalize people for becoming wealthy. We applaud their success. But we should not subsidize health care for those of us who can afford our health care while those who cannot are left to fend for themselves. In other words, the Republicans are once again saying you are on your own.

Their bill also raids the Medicare trust fund, threatening its long-term solvency. In fact, the affordable care added to the life expectancy of Medicare. The bill that the Republicans have put forward imposes severe cuts to Medicaid as well. It forces States and healthcare providers to carry the burden of the uninsured while taking away funding for expanded Medicaid.

Their bill requires States to ration care by throwing those with pre-existing conditions into "sick pools," with higher premiums, higher deductibles, and waiting periods for coverage. And what services would be available under Medicaid?

Their plan replaces the individual responsibility requirement which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, as you may well know, was the proposal of The Heritage Foundation. The Heritage Action for America, which is the political arm of the foundation, opposes the Republican bill. Not for the same reason I do, but because they believe it continues much of what ACA tried to do in protecting Americans in a plan that was initially proposed by The Heritage Foundation and adopted by Governor Romney in Massachusetts.

Unbelievably, Mr. Speaker, Republicans won't even tell the American people how much this legislation will cost and what its impact will be on consumers' wallets and on our insurance markets. How do you do that? You have hearings, you listen to people, you listen to their experiences now, you listen to what their needs are, and you listen to those who have the greatest experience on their view of what the impact of this legislation will be. There have been no such hearings and none are planned.

Republicans know that millions of Americans will lose coverage under their legislation: those covered under Medicaid, the health insurance exchanges, and even those with employer-based insurance. That is why, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, they are rushing to see this bill put in force before it is illuminated by the light of day and before the American people find out how they will be impacted.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, it will be difficult for House Republicans to enact their bill into law, not only because of the extreme opposition to those proposals by the American people, as we have seen in townhall meeting after townhall meeting after townhall meeting across this country, but also because the House and Senate Republicans are already rejecting it. It is not certain that House Republicans can even reach a majority in this House on their legislation.

The head of the Republican Study Committee, the largest group of Republicans, has said this bill is not acceptable. The gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS), the head of the Freedom Caucus, has said this bill does not repeal the Affordable Care Act, which is his objective and the objective of the Freedom Caucus. Senator CRUZ has said that as well. Senator PAUL has said that as well. Senator LEE has said that as well.

One thing is clear, however, Mr. Speaker, House Republicans are going to have to find the votes on their own to dismantle the protections incorporated in the Affordable Care Act that the American people now have.

Is the Affordable Care Act perfect? It is not. Should we have spent the last 6