

Care Act, but this TrumpCare bill is not the answer, and I am working with my colleagues to fight against this legislation.

Furthermore, I am working on additional legislation that would help combat this substance misuse crisis. I joined Senator PORTMAN in introducing the STOP Act, bipartisan legislation that would help stop dangerous synthetic drugs like fentanyl and carfentanyl from being shipped through our borders to drug traffickers here in the United States. These synthetic drugs are only making this crisis more dangerous, causing a spike in deaths in New Hampshire and across the Nation. We must do everything possible to stop them from entering our country.

I joined a bipartisan group of colleagues, led by Senator KLOBUCHAR, to introduce the SALTS Act, which would empower law enforcement to crack down on synthetic substances and better prosecute drug traffickers.

I also joined Senators MANCHIN, SHAHEEN, and several of our colleagues to reintroduce the LifeBOAT Act, which would establish a permanent funding stream to provide and expand access to substance misuse treatment.

These are essential steps we need to take now. I will also continue evaluating additional legislative steps to support treatment, prevention, recovery, and law enforcement efforts. We know the road ahead will not be easy. The scourge of addiction requires us, at times, to change the way we have always done things at a quicker pace than is sometimes comfortable but that can never be an excuse for inaction.

Every day, I am reminded of the stories like those of the grandmother I met at the annual Easter egg hunt, Phil's and Ashley's, and those of the thousands in my State who continue to feel the impacts of a crisis that is taking far too many lives. By making their voices heard, citizens in New Hampshire are breaking through the stigma of addiction and, in turn, are helping others seek the treatment and recovery they need. It is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that those critical services are there for them.

We must all continue to speak up and fight for those who are voiceless and those who continue to struggle. We must reach out and work toward policies that can truly make a difference because often when we reach out, people reach back, but if we are silent or if we allow the rug to be pulled out from under those seeking help, this epidemic will only get worse. It will devastate even further our families, our communities, and our businesses.

I am going to continue to fight to make progress, and I am willing to work with anyone to help those struggling to get the treatment they need and to support all of the dedicated professionals who are on the frontlines of battling this crisis. We will have to continue to fight together, each and

every one of us, every single day, to build on our efforts to combat this epidemic, and by working together, we can and we will stem and turn the tide.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GARDNER). The Senator from New Hampshire.

CONGRATULATING SENATOR HASSAN

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I just wanted to say how pleased I am to be able to join my colleague from New Hampshire on the floor for her official maiden address. It is so nice to see so many of our women colleagues here for this as well.

As she pointed out, I just wanted to echo the great work Senator HASSAN has done, especially as Governor, in expanding the Medicaid Program in New Hampshire so that it provides treatment for so many people, especially when it comes to the heroin and opioid epidemic, and why we are so concerned about any efforts to roll that back—because that would kick thousands of people in New Hampshire off of treatment with nowhere else to go. I certainly plan to continue to join her as we fight for this effort, and I know our colleagues are going to help us in that. I believe that if we all work together, we can make progress, as she has so eloquently stated.

So congratulations to Senator HASSAN for her first official maiden speech. I know it will be just one of many more to come.

(The remarks of Mrs. SHAHEEN pertaining to the submission of S. 630 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mrs. SHAHEEN. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

REPUBLICAN HEALTHCARE BILL

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, last week Republicans in the House released a bill to repeal the Affordable Care Act and cut Medicaid to the bone. On Tuesday, the Congressional Budget Office—those are the independent budget experts who analyze policies under consideration here in Congress—estimated that the plan would rip health insurance coverage away from 24 million Americans and cut \$880 billion in the Medicaid program. And as a bonus, the plan provides hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks for the rich. Who comes up with a plan like this? What kind of healthcare bill has, as its central feature, ripping away

health insurance from tens of millions of American citizens?

What kind of politician thinks they were sent to Congress to destroy the financial stability of millions of middle-class families and give wealthy donors a tax break that they certainly don't need? Who thinks that the central problem in America is that middle-class families have too much healthcare coverage and that the richest people in America need government to hand them more money? There is no other way to say it: This bill is just part of a Republican plan to help the rich get richer and kick dirt in everyone else's face.

This bill is an economic disaster, and at its center, it is cruel—cancer survivors losing coverage, seniors facing premium increases of \$12,000 a year, people with disabilities forced into nursing homes. And one of the cruelest things is what this bill will do to individuals, to families, and to communities struggling with the opioid crisis.

Last year in Massachusetts, nearly 2,000 people died from opioid use. That is more than double the number who died in 2013. That is right, double. Between 2014 and 2015, Massachusetts had a bigger jump in its death rate from drug overdoses than any other State except North Dakota.

Last week, I was on the front lines in Lynn Community Health Center, where dedicated staffers are trying to meet this opioid epidemic head on. This week, I went to Manet Community Health Center, where a coordinated team in Quincy is battling the opioid crisis. While I was there, I not only met with the professionals, I saw the mamas and the babies, the people who are in recovery, and people who reach out to those who are still in the grip of drugs. The opioid crisis isn't happening to someone else's family or in someone else's community. It is happening to our families in our communities, and we need to do more to stop this plague before it takes another of our loved ones.

We need to do more; what we absolutely cannot do is less. We cannot take away the resources already committed to fighting the opioid crisis so that some millionaire can get a tax break. Current law, the ACA, requires all insurance plans to cover substance use disorder treatment and prevention as an essential health benefit. That means that your insurance company can't turn off the access to treatment just when you need it most by saying: Sorry, we just don't cover that. Current law, the ACA, gave people the chance to get that insurance through health exchanges and subsidies. Millions more people got private insurance. And through Medicaid expansion, millions more were covered by Medicaid. So there it is, our first line of defense in the war on opioid addiction.

The ACA currently means that more people are covered, and that coverage includes substance abuse treatment. What does the Republican plan do? It

takes away coverage for 24 million people. That is 24 million people who no longer have any access to substance use disorder treatment and prevention services. And then they want to let insurance companies jack up the out-of-pocket costs for substance abuse programs and mental health programs. In fact, some Medicaid plans would be able to drop this coverage altogether. So millions more people would lose their one lifeline if someone in their family is taken by drugs.

Don't get me wrong. What we are doing right now is not enough. Even now, only 10 percent of those who need treatment for substance use disorder receive it and 90 percent can't get help, but that means we need more, not less help.

Repealing the protections for mental health and substance use disorders in the ACA would yank more than \$5 billion in actual funding that is currently going to mental health and treatment services. That is the Republican plan to deal with the opioid crisis. Ask any family trying to get treatment for a loved one who is addicted to drugs. We already have an opioid treatment gap. Gutting the ACA is like shoving a stick of dynamite into the treatment gap and then lighting the fuse. And if the Republicans get their way, people will lose health coverage. People will lose access to recovery services. People will die.

Now is the time to stop this cruel bill in its tracks before it hurts real people. Now is the time to speak out about the importance of the ACA and Medicaid to you and to your family.

If you or someone you know has been touched by the opioid epidemic, you know how much this matters. Maybe you have a sister, a child, a church member, or a high school friend who has struggled with substance use disorder. Maybe you know someone who has fought on the frontlines of this crisis as a healthcare provider, community advocate, as a first responder.

If you do, then you know the stakes in this debate over the ACA and Medicaid. Now is the time to act. Don't wait. If the Republicans end up destroying help for millions of people, don't wake up the next morning and wonder if you could have said more or if you could have raised your voice back when it mattered. No, the Republicans are trying to pass this terrible healthcare bill now, now is the time to speak out. It is time to stand up and to tell Republicans to end their cruel healthcare plan. Our families and our communities are counting on us and we cannot let them down. Please, speak out.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

RECOGNIZING THE 45TH IDITAROD RACE

Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, we have been talking a lot about the

weather here in Washington, DC, the past couple of days. We got a little bit of snow yesterday in some parts. People are still kind of plowing out of their driveways. I am looking at the daffodils that were out 3 days ago, and they are now buried, and the cherry blossoms are a little bit crispy on the trees.

So many of us are not feeling like spring has really sprung here. But in Alaska, in my home State, when we think of spring, one of the things that brings a smile to the face of so many of us is that it means it is time for the Iditarod, the Last Great Race on Earth. It is an exciting time of the year for so many, when we come together to celebrate a 1,000-mile race across some pretty desolate territory in the State of Alaska.

The race itself has a much storied history, one that is somewhat unique to the State of Alaska and to our culture. The race commemorates a lifesaving diphtheria serum run to the community of Nome. Back in 1925, diphtheria had raged through the community, and there was no way to get the serum to Nome. We did not have aircraft that could make it that far. Remember, it is pretty cold in February and in March. We still don't have a road. We really had no way to move the diphtheria serum.

So it was determined, after a great deal of debate and discussion and pros and cons that they would use a dog team relay to get the diphtheria serum to Nome. There are names of dogs that have now become infamous, like Togo, Fritz, and Balto, which led this amazing race. Today, the memory of that lifesaving race is lived on in a race that features just a little bit shy of 1,000 miles, again across pretty frozen isolated areas. It involves 1,000-plus dogs that are in the running.

For many of us, there are 1,000 more reasons that you really would not want to do that. But I have to tell you, as I look at these mushers, as I look at all that goes into the mushing history of our State, it makes me excited about not only the men and women who are the mushers but the true athletes, the K-9 athletes, and all that they give up.

I was home in Anchorage last weekend for the ceremonial start on Saturday. It is a great deal of hoopla. There are not too many communities in America where you actually truck snow into the downtown part of your community, fill the streets up with snow so that the dog teams can launch from downtown. Thousands of people gather to watch the start. We were commemorating the 45th annual Iditarod race.

The official start was on Monday morning in Fairbanks, AK, a town that I also call home, having gone to high school there. The route this year was from Fairbanks, what they call the northerly route, up to Nome. It shaves a little bit of the miles off. I think this year it was about 979 miles. So it was

not quite 1,000 miles, but still good enough to test a man or a woman and their dogs.

It was kind of tough starting in Fairbanks on the morning of the race. Temperatures were around 50 below. They hit the river, went right past the house where I grew up, and went downriver. By the time they got to the first checkpoint there at Tanana, the temperatures were 50 below and people were talking about how you stay warm on a sled and who has bad frostbite that is coming back after years of running.

Let's just put it this way. The Iditarod is not for the timid or the weak. It takes real grit to run this race. When you think about all the hoopla that comes with the ceremonial start and all the people who came out in the community, then you get on the trail and you are alone. You are by yourself. We have 26 different checkpoints between Fairbanks and Nome. As a musher reaches a checkpoint, there is an appreciative audience of the villagers who come out to cheer them on.

Again, the villagers can't offer help with taking care of the teams. The mushers have to do it all themselves. But there is a lot of time to think and reflect about the beauty surrounding you, a lot of time to worry about whether or not you have moose or wolf or bear or whatever is out there keeping them company. But truly, this is not only an endurance race, but it is a race that challenges the mind. There are stretches of just almost mind-numbing isolation in the cold where you are just focusing on your team in front of you.

But as you can see, when you get out—this is right on the outskirts of Nome; this is coming in at the end of the race—there is a lot of isolation out there. The temperatures that you are dealing with are tough on a human being. Over the course of this past week, the temperature range was a 70-degree range. The temperature in Nome yesterday at the conclusion was 4 degrees above zero. So it is on the positive side, which was good news for the mushers. But that is a pretty substantial range that you are going through.

It is an amazing race in terms of the strategy that goes into it. You would think: Well, you just get your dogs in line. You know where you are going to feed them. You know where you are going to let them rest.

But the strategy that goes into a race like this is really quite unique to the various mushers. What we have seen with this race is an extraordinarily fast race, where the winner was averaging between 10 and 11 miles per hour between some of these checkpoints. It is pretty extraordinary to have your dogs keep up a pace like this.

Some mushers will hop off their sleds and run alongside their dogs when they are going uphill, just to take some of