bills that were piling up, and ultimately she didn't have to write a check for the transplant. That is because Megan had health insurance despite a preexisting condition, and the Affordable Care Act created a transitional program to cover eligible individuals with preexisting conditions, like Megan.

After Megan left the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, her cancer went into remission, but then the cancer came back. The remission only lasted 63 days. They flew to Texas, to the MD Anderson Cancer Center. Why travel across the country to get cancer treatments? Because when you are dying—when a mom is watching her daughter die, there is nothing she as a parent would not do. You can't put a price on your child's life. It would do us a lot of good if we would remember that.

Sadly, Megan had a fall and hit her head. She died at the age of 28. Her total care during that battle with cancer could have cost Elaine, her mom, $5 million. Thanks to the ACA, because she had health insurance, Megan's part of that treatment was $70,000. That not only saved her from going bankrupt, it also gave her more time to spend with her daughter. Anyone who has lost someone knows that every second counts. We shouldn't take things for granted.

Elaine said that her daughter would be proud to know that her story of the Affordable Care Act matters. It matters to me as their Senator, and that is why I am telling it on the floor of the Senate.

And it should matter to every one of these Senators here.

Let me give you another person that I met along the trail. I met with one of the most courageous 14-year-olds whom I have ever seen, JJ Holmes, and his family, who are from Longwood, FL.

JJ has cerebral palsy and requires a wheelchair and constant attention to get around and to be taken care of. He can only communicate with his computer vocalization device. It is just amazing, since JJ can't directly communicate except by the sparkle in his eyes. He uses his left knee on a device on the wheelchair to hit it and it goes to a computer screen, and he can type out the words and the sounds in order to give him an ability to communicate with another ordinary person.

JJ has a preexisting condition—he has cerebral palsy—and all of the efforts to repeal and undermine the ACA are undermining his access to care and his ability to live. Each attempt to repeal the ACA was another threat to his very life.

His mom told me that there is so much of a daily struggle, worry, and heartache when you have a child who is severely disabled, and the ACA finally gave that family the much needed security, and it lifted a huge burden of how in the world were they going to cope with this medical condition of their child.

I will give you another example in Florida. Earlier this year, I was joined at a local roundtable on healthcare by Elizabeth Isom from St. Petersburg. Elizabeth told me that the ACA had saved her life and allowed her to purchase insurance for the very first time. She doesn't know how she is going to be able to afford coverage if the lifetime caps of the law are reinstated and if essential health benefits are not provided as the ACA provides.

Elizabeth was a productive member of society. She was a social worker, and then she developed a sinus tumor. She went without insurance for 3 years, during which her health was constantly deteriorating and it was to the point that she thought she was dying. She had vital organ damage and reached complete disability. The mass in her sinus had extended into her skull.

After the ACA became the law of the land, she purchased insurance through healthcare.gov. She said it is the best insurance she has ever had because it covered essential health benefits like the preventative services.

So let's think about this just in these three cases that I have given. The ACA protects people like Megan with preexisting conditions from being charged more simply because of their diagnosis. It protects people like JJ from being unable to afford care because they have hit annual or lifetime limits on coverage. It protects people like Elizabeth from being denied treatment because insurers are now required to cover essential health services—services and benefits like hospitalizations and prescription drugs.

These folks are not the only ones that I have talked to about how the ACA has changed their life. The American people—not just Floridians—have been writing to us, have been calling to us, have been showing up in our townhalls, have been showing up at our roundtables, have been approaching me on the street corner, at the airport, at events all over Florida to share how important the ACA is to them. The Affordable Care Act has given people healthcare they otherwise would never have had. Over and over, they have come to me and said: We want to see a bipartisan fix—a fix to the ACA, not a repeal. Why can't you just get together and fix the ACA?

How many times have I made that plea on the floor of the Senate? And they are right. There is a lot of work to be done to bring down the cost of healthcare, to make insurance more affordable, and to increase coverage for people who still don't have it. But in the meantime, the Trump administration is doing everything in its power to undermine and undo the existing law that has helped so many so much.

We have seen an Executive order of President Trump's stating that the policy of his administration was to ''seek the prompt repeal'' of the ACA. We have seen rules coming out of the Trump administration cutting in half the length of time that people had to enroll in plans on healthcare.gov, eliminating low-income subsidies, and cutting outreach and advertising for enrollment by 90 percent.

Why would you make it harder for people to sign up for health insurance if your intention wasn't to undermine the Affordable Care Act, which is exactly what the Trump administration's intention is?

We have seen the implementation of expanding short-term health plans. These are plans that are less than a year or, as they really are designed, junk plans, and that is just what they are. They don't offer essential health benefits. They offer extremely limited coverage so that people don't have the coverage and they don't have the coverage of preexisting conditions. They remove protections for people with those preexisting conditions. They do not cover that list of 10 or 12 things called essential health benefits, like maternity care and prescription drug costs.

We have seen multiple Republican repeal-and-replace bills that have come before the House and before this Senate. We have seen this Trump administration claim that they do care about those with preexisting conditions. Just last month President Trump tweeted that ''Republicans will protect people with preexisting conditions far better than the Dems!'' But that is not what they are doing, nor is that what they have done.

Well, Mr. President, if that is the case, then why is your administration supporting the lawsuit Texas vs. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—that very lawsuit that was brought forward by Republican attorneys general, including Florida's attorney general, urging a Federal court to strike down preexisting conditions and patient protections as unconstitutional, and it would cause a chaos in our healthcare system.

You are not protecting 133 million Americans with preexisting conditions. No, what you are doing is eliminating their healthcare, and that includes 17 million children.

The administration should better look at their situation and do the opposite of what they have been doing. I ask the American people to demand that the Trump administration stop undermining the ACA, get to work as an administration, do its job, and implement all parts of the existing law, the Affordable Care Act. We should be looking for ways to help people like Elaine, JJ, Megan, and Elizabeth. We should be looking for ways to help them get through the tough times. We should be working together in a bipartisan way to make the ACA work better, not try to kill it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRUZ). The Senator from Hawaii.

NOMINATION OF THOMAS FARR

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. President, I thank my friend, the Senator from Florida,

for speaking out on the critical importance of the Affordable Care Act for millions of people in our country and for calling upon this administration to support healthcare for all instead of what they are doing to the healthcare of millions of people in our country.

Turning to another matter, nearly 12 years ago, on December 7, 2006, President George W. Bush nominated Thomas Farr to be a U.S. District Court Judge for the Eastern District of North Carolina. Today, 12 years and three nominations later, his name is again before us for confirmation to the very same vacancy, which has remained unfilled all this time.

When Mr. Farr was nominated for this vacancy in 2006 and 2007, his nomination did not receive a vote in the Judiciary Committee. It was known at that time that Mr. Farr had spent his professional life engaged in restricting minority voting rights and defending companies alleged to have discriminated against African Americans, women, and others.

In the 1980s and in 1990, Mr. Farr represented Senator Jesse Helms, notorious for his opposition to civil rights, voting rights, women's rights, workers' rights, and LGBTQ rights—in other words, individual rights.

Mr. Farr also helped corporations fight off their employees' discrimination claims. In 2003, Mr. Farr defended Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina against claims by a female employee who alleged that the company had compelled her to resign because of her sex and age. To win this case, Mr. Farr convinced the North Carolina Supreme Court to strike down the county's antidiscrimination law.

Given this history of restricting minority voting rights and defending companies in discrimination claims, Mr. Farr's nomination did not proceed at that time, and rightly so.

In the 12 years since his first nomination, Mr. Farr has become notorious for his defense of the North Carolina legislature's attempts to disenfranchise African-American voters.

His current nomination is opposed by nearly every civil rights group in North Carolina and nationally, and the Congressional Black Caucus, or the CBC, has fought Mr. Farr's nomination.

In a 2017 letter to the Judiciary Committee, the CBC wrote: ''It is no exaggeration to say that had the White House deliberately sought to identify an attorney in North Carolina with a more hostile record on African-American voting rights and workers' rights than Thomas Farr, it could hardly have done so.''

This district court vacancy was not filled by President Obama in his two terms, but not for lack of trying. President Obama nominated two different African-American women for this vacancy, one an assistant U.S. Attorney and another a State court judge. Neither nomination moved forward because the Republican home State Senators withheld their blue slips. Judiciary Committee Chairman LEAHY and, later, Chairman GRASSLEY both, at that time, abided by the blue-slip process during that period, as I said, and no hearings were ever held for these two Obama nominees.

At the same time, both of my colleagues from North Carolina persisted in their desire to confirm Mr. Farr to the Federal bench. Of course, now, the return of a blue slip is no longer a barrier to pushing nominees through the Judiciary Committee.

So, on the recommendation of my Senate colleagues from North Carolina, Donald Trump nominated Mr. Farr yet again to the seat that had been kept open in the Eastern District of North Carolina. In fact, when Mr. Farr's nomination was returned at the end of a session of Congress last year, the White House decided to renominate him this year.

The history regarding this judicial vacancy and Mr. Farr is key to understanding why I and so many of my colleagues will vote no. We will be accused of obstruction and wanting to deprive the people of North Carolina of a judge in the Eastern District. We will hear how this is the longest open vacancy on the entire Federal bench, but, in fact, this vacancy has remained open so long because of Republicans' refusal to confirm qualified minority women and their insistence on filling this vacancy with a man whose career is filled with examples of his using the law to advance a racist, obstructionist, plainly un-American agenda.

Had the Republicans not blocked the nominations of qualified minority women in 2013 and 2016, this district, which is about 27 percent African American, would have had its first African-American judge.

By contrast Mr. Farr has spent decades opposing the rights of African Americans, women, and workers. Let me highlight a few examples.

When Mr. Farr was working as legal counsel for the 1990 campaign for Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina, the Justice Department filed a Federal lawsuit against the campaign for trying to intimidate thousands of African Americans from voting. How did they do this? The Helms campaign staff sent postcards suggesting that the voters were ineligible to vote and warning that they could be prosecuted if they voted. Although Mr. Farr denied any involvement in these racist voter intimidation efforts, the Justice Department attorney who investigated the matter confirmed that Mr. Farr ''was certainly involved in the scheme as it was being developed.''

That is not the only time Mr. Farr has opposed the rights of African-American voters. When the North Carolina legislature decided to restrict or dilute the votes of African Americans over the past 10 years, Mr. Farr fiercely defended these efforts as a private attorney.

In 2013, for example, he defended the North Carolina legislature's voter suppression efforts that a court found were enacted with racially discriminatory intent—racially discriminatory intent. In other words, the North Carolina legislature was totally upfront about what they were up to.

After the Supreme Court effectively struck down the part of the Voting Rights Act that required North Carolina to preclear any changes to their voting laws, the North Carolina State legislature passed a law that eliminated or cut back on voter mechanisms that African Americans disproportionately used. This is the law that Mr. Farr defended. The Fourth Circuit in that case determined that these voting changes ''target[ed] African Americans with almost surgical precision.'' In other words, blatantly discriminatory intent was found by the Fourth Circuit.

Between his efforts to support suppression of voters, Mr. Farr has helped companies avoid accountability for discrimination against African Americans, women, and minority groups. In 2003, Mr. Farr argued that female employees at Pfizer were not protected under Federal civil rights law from condescending, sexist, and sexual comments from their manager because they were not ''severe'' or ''pervasive'' enough.

He even tried to undermine the plaintiff's claim by arguing that she failed to point out that her manager ''harassed her because of her gender on a daily or weekly basis.'' That was the standard he applied: You have to have been harassed on a daily or weekly basis. Mr. Farr ultimately convinced the court to dismiss the employee's claim as untimely.

A person who has devoted decades of his legal career to furthering oppression and injustices against minorities and women has no business being confirmed to a lifetime position as a judge, where his ideological agenda will certainly be reflected in his decision.

I will not vote for Mr. Farr's nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do likewise.

NOMINATION OF JONATHAN KOBES

Mr. President, I would also like to explain my opposition to another nominee being considered this week: Jonathan Kobes for the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals from South Dakota.

Mr. Kobes received a ''not qualified'' vote from a substantial majority of the ABA's Standing Committee on the Federal Judiciary. They reported that Kobes has ''neither the requisite experience nor evidence of his ability to fulfill the scholarly writing required of a United States Circuit Court Judge.''

They continued, saying: ''The Standing Committee had difficulty analyzing Mr. Kobes' professional competence because he was unable to provide sufficient writing samples of the caliber required to satisfy Committee members that he was capable of doing the work of a United States Circuit Court judge''; hence, their ''not qualified'' vote for him.

In normal times, this sort of negative evaluation from the ABA would be given to the White House before the White House decided to nominate someone, and the person would never be nominated. But these are not normal times.