

cab services for young people trying to attend classes. By providing \$200 on car repair costs, the district ultimately saved money on transportation, and families had more reliable car services.

Both districts also used funding to bring on additional staff designated to work with homeless students. The Child in Transition Program in the Anchorage School District was able to hire two full-time staff for remote sites and five part-time staff in high schools to support students on campus and connect them to services. These staffers are connecting students and families with identification efforts, checking in on attendance and grades, monitoring and supporting academic progress, and facilitating referrals with community partners.

In fact, one of these staffers was able to build rapport with a student experiencing homelessness who was interested in applying for a job, but didn't know how to start the process. By having a dedicated staff member, who they knew and trusted, the support and resources were there for this student to apply for the position and prepare for their interview. Today, that young person is employed.

These real-life examples highlight what this funding is actually doing on the ground and the incredible, real world benefits it has in the lives of youth and families experiencing homelessness.

We know that the No. 1 risk factor for adult homelessness is the lack of a high school education or equivalent.

The challenges and hardships that youth experiencing homelessness face can set them on the wrong path, severely limiting future opportunities for employment and healthy lifestyles.

These funds are still directly supporting students so they can attend school and have the resources to successfully complete their education.

This funding is helping young people get out of the homelessness cycle permanently.

I am proud to stand here with my colleagues to share the impact of this American Rescue Plan provision.

I was disappointed that we were not able to get a clean 1-year extension done so that we can continue to hear good stories of the work being done in our communities to identify and support homeless youth.

There were a number of reasons that States and local education agencies were not able to fully spend down their funds—from local education agencies not even being aware of the additional flexible funds, to delayed guidelines from the Department of Education on allowable uses.

So without an extension, some States will be returning funds. And make no mistake: These are funds that are still critically needed in our communities. The youth experiencing homelessness in our States still need our support, and we expect to see continued increases in homeless youth.

To be clear, there is more work to be done with homelessness on the rise. I

urge my colleagues to work with us to address these issues.

CONSTITUTION WEEK

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise in recognition of Constitution Week, recognized from September 17 through September 23.

Since 1956, Congress has recognized an annual Constitution Week in recognition of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in Philadelphia on September 17, 1787. We also recognize Constitution Day and Citizenship Day on September 17, providing an opportunity for us to reflect upon and to learn about our Nation's founding document.

This annual recognition is of critical importance. Our Constitution informs our system of governance, creates individual rights and liberties, and expresses our collective values. Throughout my time in office, I have prioritized working to improve the quality of U.S. history and civics education throughout our Nation. Educating current and future generations of Americans about our Constitution is a critical piece of this.

While the flaws and omissions inherent in the original Constitution are widely recognized, one of its most important features is that it was designed to remain adaptable to future generations of Americans. Virginia delegate Edmund Randolph, one of the drafters, stated that the intention was to "insert essential principles only, lest the operations of government should be clogged by rendering those provisions permanent and unalterable, which ought to be accommodated to times and events."

Of course, article V of our Constitution also lays out an explicit amendment process. Amendments can be made to our Constitution when proposed by a two-thirds vote of both the House and Senate and ratified by three-fourths of the State legislatures, which equates to 38 States.

Today, we are in the unprecedented situation in which a constitutional amendment ratified by the required 38 States has not been formally recognized as a part of our Constitution. In 2020, Virginia became the 38th and final required State to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, which was proposed and sent to the States after passage by broad bipartisan majorities in 1972.

The ERA would constitutionally protect the equality of rights under the law, regardless of sex. The main clause of the amendment simply states, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex."

Despite what many Americans believe, the only right explicitly guaranteed regardless of sex in the U.S. Constitution is the 19th Amendment right to vote. The Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment has been invoked successfully in sex discrimination cases, but the outcomes of these chal-

lenges have been inconsistent. The current Supreme Court's approach to the Constitution highlights the need for the ERA, given the apparent belief by some Justices that the Equal Protection Clause should be frozen in time in 1868, casting in doubt those precedents currently holding that the Equal Protection Clause applies to sex discrimination.

Our lack of an explicit provision places us out of line with the rest of the world. Eighty-five percent of countries have an explicit prohibition against governmental discrimination on the basis of sex.

The United States is the only industrialized democracy that does not include an explicit provision in its Constitution, a marker that I take seriously as the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. On August 6 of 2024, the American Bar Association, which is the leading legal association in our Nation, voted overwhelmingly to recognize the ERA as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Resolution 601 urges government on all levels to implement the ERA now.

This important affirmation by our Nation's leading association of lawyers is in line with the position taken by many members of this body. In a vote on April 27, 2024, a bipartisan majority of U.S. Senators voted to affirm the validity of the Equal Rights Amendment as our 28th Amendment to the Constitution and to explicitly remove the deadline that Congress included in the preamble of the resolution proposing the ERA to the States.

In both 2020 and 2021, the House of Representatives passed a similar joint resolution to explicitly remove this arbitrary deadline for adoption of this critical constitutional amendment.

It is important that we pass this S.J. Res. 4, which I have been pleased to lead on a bipartisan basis with Senator LISA MURKOWSKI of Alaska, to remove any ambiguity and to make it clear beyond a doubt that the ERA is a valid part of our Constitution. The passage of this resolution is long overdue. However, the fact remains that the Equal Rights Amendment has already fulfilled all of the requirements laid out in article V and should be recognized—today—as our 28th Amendment.

Women still face serious challenges "on account of sex," and our existing legal framework does not always provide a sufficient remedy.

As the 28th Amendment, the ERA would serve as a new tool—for Congress, for Federal Agencies, and the courts—to advance equality in the fields of workforce and pay, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment and violence, reproductive autonomy, and protections for LGBTQ+ individuals.

For example, we recently recognized 30 years since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act, which President Biden described as his "proudest legislative achievement." Despite all of the successful progress through VAWA,

a U.S. Supreme Court decision invalidated one of its key elements: the creation of a private right of action to allow survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse to sue for civil damages from their perpetrators. The Court struck down this democratically approved legislation on the grounds that it was outside of Congress's power.

It stymied the ability of our democratically elected branches to address the critical problem of gender-based violence. The ERA would serve as an explicit constitutional backstop for legislation like VAWA's private right of action that is intended to address problems of inequality, as well as serving as a tool in the courts.

Our Constitution is a reflection of our values, and no value is more American than equality. I call for the passage of S.J. Res. 4. I also express my strong belief that the ERA has fulfilled the requirements of article V and should be recognized as such.

INFLATION REDUCTION ACT HEALTH PROVISIONS

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today to highlight the critical importance of the health provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act, IRA.

Last week, the Senate Finance Committee held a hearing entitled, "Lower Health Care Costs for Americans: Understanding the Benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act." Since President Biden signed the IRA into law on August 16, 2022, this landmark legislation continues to make life easier for American families to afford health insurance coverage and prescription drugs.

Across the board, costs are being lowered. Since January 2023, thanks to the IRA, insulin for Medicare beneficiaries is capped at \$35 a month, and all recommended vaccines are available for seniors at no cost. The IRA further lowers drug costs by capping out-of-pocket Medicare part D beneficiaries' expenses at \$2,000. And in 2026, Medicare will begin implementing negotiated drug prices, starting with 10 of the highest cost prescription drugs.

Last month, the Biden-Harris administration took on Big Pharma and succeeded in negotiating to lower prices for 10 of the most common and expensive drugs under Medicare. Americans are expected to save \$6 billion on prescription drug costs, and people enrolled in Medicare are expected to save \$1.5 billion in out-of-pocket costs in 2026 alone. Early next year, the administration will announce 15 more drugs that will be subject to price negotiations.

Prior to this historic piece of legislation, drug companies were routinely charging Americans three times more than patients in other countries for the same medication.

However, the Biden-Harris administration's announcement last month ended this pattern by unveiling negotiated lower prices for some of the

most expensive, popular drugs taken to treat conditions including blood clots, diabetes, cancer, heart failure, and rheumatoid arthritis. Every day, millions of Americans are saving money on healthcare costs, thanks to the Biden-Harris administration.

This was made possible because of the IRA, which passed thanks to my Democratic colleagues in Congress and with Vice President HARRIS' tie-breaking vote in the Senate. Every single Republican voted against it.

In 2021, the Biden-Harris administration was able to pass temporary subsidies for low-income Americans as part of the American Rescue Plan Act, ARPA. With the passage of the IRA a year later, these enhanced premium tax credits (PTCs) were extended for an additional 3 years. These PTCs have been a key driver of the record 21.4 million people signing up for coverage under the ACA.

As things stand, the enhanced PTCs passed in the Inflation Reduction Act will expire in 2025. We cannot let this happen. We know access to affordable health insurance saves lives and reduces costs by enabling people to access the care they need. If these enhanced PTCs are allowed to expire next year, over 20 million Americans will see a sudden increase in their health insurance costs. Additionally, an estimated 3 million Americans could lose their health insurance entirely.

Another policy included in the IRA to increase prescription drug affordability is capping Medicare patients' out-of-pocket costs at \$3,000 in just a couple of months and \$2,000 per year in 2025. This policy will prevent Medicare beneficiaries from paying tens of thousands of dollars to purchase lifesaving drugs prescribed by their doctors.

Further, many vaccines are available with no beneficiary cost-sharing under Medicare. Vaccines can be incredibly expensive. For example, the shingles vaccine can cost up to \$385 for seniors. In 2023, the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission (MACPAC) estimated that vaccination rates for adults enrolled in Medicaid were lower than adults with private health insurance coverage. Now, Medicare beneficiaries can receive all adult vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for free, including the shingles vaccine. That means no copayment or other out-of-pocket costs.

Democrats voted for this, and the Biden-Harris administration made it happen. Americans and Marylanders are struggling to pay for their prescription medications, and it is long past time for Congress to remedy this obstacle. Prescription drugs have been lifesaving for millions, but if they are unaffordable, then their benefit is of no significance.

No one should have to go into debt to buy the prescription drugs they need to live a healthy, productive life, and yet, that is a dilemma many families in the

U.S. face. Twenty-nine percent of Americans either cannot afford their prescription drugs or are rationing them. Too often, groups in fair or poor health struggle the most to afford their medications.

Opponents of addressing the high prescription drug prices, claim that more affordable prices will come at the expense of innovation. I say, and the research agrees, that is false. The U.S. Government ensures there is access to innovative treatments and prescriptions. The best example of this can be found in my home State of Maryland, the National Institute of Health (NIH), which is the world's largest government funder of biomedical research. Almost all drugs rely on NIH-supported basic science. And the returns on these investments are very high.

Researchers from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have found that each \$125 million NIH grant leads to \$375 million more in private market value, 33 more patents, and one new drug. Another study estimated that the rate of return on NIH investment is 43 percent, and that each dollar in NIH funding leads to an additional \$8.40 in private research and development (R&D) spending.

Despite these significant taxpayer investments, prescription drugs are often priced at levels that limit access to lifesaving drugs, particularly among those who are underinsured or uninsured. Even after accounting for the cost and risk of R&D, evidence shows the returns to new products exceed normal rates of return.

These drug manufacturers offer many important and lifesaving medications that people need and deserve. Patients and the healthcare system should not be price gouged or priced out, which is why the IRA is so important for American families.

There is evidence that the IRA health provisions have reduced out-of-pocket spending for millions of Americans. I urge all of my Senate colleagues to join Democrats and the Biden-Harris administration to ensure all of our constituents have access to affordable, lifesaving, and life-sustaining prescription drugs. When it comes to these essential medications, no one should have to choose between putting food on their table and their health—or even their life.

WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I rise today to discuss the deeply concerning trend of the criminalization of women's healthcare, particularly after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

I want to bring awareness to this week's Senate Finance Committee hearing entitled, "Chaos and Control: How Trump Criminalized Women's Health Care." Now, more than ever, it is vital to codify reproductive rights and protect other hard-won civil rights as they faced renewed threats.