

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.

We must prioritize women's health and reproductive rights by passing comprehensive legislation like the Women's Health Protection Act, the Right to Contraception Act, and the Right to IVF Act.

Last week, ProPublica published two articles documenting the devastating and entirely preventable deaths of Amber Thurman and Candi Miller, two mothers living in Georgia. The deaths of these mothers were due to Georgia's strict abortion ban. According to 10 maternal health experts and doctors on a Georgia State committee who reviewed these two cases, their deaths were impacted by the State's abortion ban—an abortion ban that does not, as promoted, protect the life of the mother.

It has been made clear to the public that pregnant women across the United States are losing their lives for reasons that could have been avoided. Since abortion was banned or restricted in 22 States over the past 2 years, pregnant women have been forced to carry a pregnancy to term, travel across State lines to those without an abortion ban, and even face rejection from emergency room doctors. The right to abortion was deeply held by women for almost 50 years, and the right to access contraception has existed for almost 60 years. Despite the clear constitutional rights the Supreme Court established almost 50 years ago in the landmark *Roe v. Wade* decision, each year, legislatures across the country have passed harmful abortion restrictions in an effort to impede a woman's fundamental right to make the best, informed healthcare decisions for herself and her family.

Reproductive freedom is continuously undermined and attacked, even though 80 percent of the public believe decisions about abortion should be made by women in consultation with their healthcare providers. I urge my colleagues to accurately represent their constituents, who overwhelming support a woman's right to choose, without the interference from Federal, State, or local governments. At no point is a politician more qualified to look at and assess your reproductive health than you and your healthcare provider.

As it stands, we are facing an extreme healthcare worker shortage because of the Dobbs decision. Providers have been forced to relocate or cease offering care altogether, leaving over one-third of women in situations where it is difficult to get abortion services in their State. Clinics and maternal health providers are stepping in to provide care for out-of-state patients who cross State borders to seek care.

In 2021, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) projected that, by 2030, roughly 3,000 fewer OB-GYNs will be practicing in the country. As of 2018, there were around 50,800 OB-GYNs, already too few to meet the country's rising demand. Many providers are afraid of facing criminal

penalties. The criminalization of doctors providing reproductive care to women is appalling.

While doctors struggle to provide care to all their patients, communities of color are facing the largest barriers when it comes to accessing abortion care. Black women are three times more likely to die in childbirth compared to their White counterparts. Many States are facing maternal healthcare deserts, especially areas that typically serve low-income communities.

When abortion is illegal, those who want to terminate a pregnancy may be forced to go a more dangerous route. The World Health Organization (WHO) found that unsafe or illegal abortions account for up to 10 percent of maternal deaths worldwide. Candi Miller tragically died in her home after taking abortion pills she ordered online. She did not visit a doctor because of the current legislation on pregnancies and abortions in Georgia. Due to abortion bans, like the one in Georgia, many women grapple with the decision to manage their abortion alone, even when they would prefer to seek care from a healthcare provider.

The Dobbs decision claimed to hand abortion to the States, but we continue to see challenges to reproductive rights elevated to the Supreme Court. *Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA* decided this past term was merely a temporary win for reproductive health, but this is not over. Anti-abortion advocates and supporters of Project 2025 will continue to attack access to medication abortion, a safe and effective drug taken by over 6 million women over the last 24 years.

I am proud that Maryland was the first State to mandate contraceptive coverage in 1998. My State has long been a leader in supporting and protecting reproductive rights. On April 14, 2023, Governor Moore announced that the State would begin to stockpile mifepristone. This is even more important now that there have been threats of weaponizing the Comstock Act against pregnant people. Maryland remains committed to serving as a safe haven for abortion and reproductive healthcare access.

Idaho's challenge to the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) is also far from over. The Biden-Harris administration was clear that States must comply with EMTALA and provide stabilizing care in emergencies, even if that care includes abortion. States like Idaho unjustifiably put women's health and life at risk when they prohibit providers from managing pregnancy complications. Patients have lost their child, their fertility, and even their organs. *Idaho v. U.S.* demonstrated that abortion bans harm all patients.

Throughout my time in Congress, I have worked to dismantle barriers to women's health. The right to choose whether to have a child is fundamental, and it is a decision that should

only be made by women in consultation with their healthcare provider, free of government interference. It is time to elevate the voices that truly know how much is at stake in the fight for reproductive freedoms. Lives are at risk, and we cannot sit back and continue to read about the growing rates of maternal mortality. Amber Thurman and Candi Miller's deaths should have been prevented. In their memory and that of all the women who have lost their lives due to their State's abortion bans, we must fight for a woman's right to reproductive care.

VENEZUELA

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I come to the floor today first and foremost to acknowledge the incredible bravery of the Venezuelan people.

On July 28, despite the Maduro regime controlling Venezuela's entire election apparatus, despite the issuing of arrest warrants against opposition campaign aides and disqualifying opponents, despite blocking nearly all independent international observers, despite the threat of violence from men on motorbikes who attacked people at opposition rallies, Venezuelans from all walks of life went to the polls to vote.

That took courage. And it took a leap of faith that they could take back their country. And had they been given the opportunity, I think it is safe to assume the nearly 8 million Venezuelans who have left the country to escape the chaos and repression in recent years, would also have voted against Maduro.

Venezuelans are tired of living under this regime. They have endured a horrific economic and humanitarian crisis. They suffer through electricity blackouts. Many in Venezuela don't have access to clean water and are instead forced to use open water in the street for bathing, cooking, and drinking.

One UN report found 96 percent of Venezuelans living in poverty. Government corruption is rampant, the regime has carved up the energy sector and given it to loyalists, and parts of the security forces actively participate in drug trafficking.

In the face of all this, Venezuelans took a chance and went to the polls. Predictably, Maduro claimed victory within hours. But thanks to the receipts from the voting machines, academics and news outlets ranging from AP to the Washington Post to the Guardian were able to analyze the results and have all concluded that the opposition won in a landslide. One election forensics professor at the University of Michigan found the opposition beat Maduro 66 percent to 31 percent.

Despite this, Maduro, without irony, declared victory, saying that the "popular will" had to be respected. More than a month later, he still hasn't released the official precinct-level results. And in attempt to distract from what he has done, he has picked fights with social media companies and has