

The motion is agreed to.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of James Danly, of Tennessee, to be Deputy Secretary of Energy.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

#### CHILD CARE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY ACT

Mrs. BRITT. Mr. President, in March of this year, I delivered remarks right here on the Senate floor about a piece of legislation—bipartisan, common-sense childcare legislation. I spoke about how the Republican Party is now the party of parents, the party of families, the party of hard-working Americans. I spoke about how we, as the party of life, the party of family, should prioritize ways to make it easier to both start and grow our families.

Since then, more and more colleagues have joined the Child Care Availability and Affordability Act. As we work to build back America, it just makes sense. I was proud to introduce this legislation with Senator TIM KAINE, and we believe it will help address our Nation's childcare crisis.

Supporters are both Republicans and Democrats. They are both parents and grandparents who understand how incredibly difficult it is to find affordable, high-quality, reliable childcare.

I have spoken about my own personal story in this Chamber, but today, I want to speak for the millions of moms and dads who don't just want Congress to do something about this, they need Congress to do something.

Recent polls show that 81 percent of America—think about that. In the time we are in right now, 81 percent of America believes affordable and available childcare is an issue that everyone should be concerned with regardless of whether they have children or not. Seventy-two percent of Republicans say that increasing Federal funding for childcare is an important priority and a good use of taxpayer dollars, and 70 percent of Independents and 90 percent of Democrats agree. Three out of every four Americans believe that the lack of childcare impacts the ability of businesses to function effectively and consistently.

The message from voters is absolutely crystal clear: It is not just parents of young children who are impacted by the lack of affordable and available childcare; it is small business owners, neighbors, grandparents, and friends. This issue cuts across different demographics and party lines.

It is a struggle that Congress absolutely should address. I believe the solution is my childcare legislation, the Child Care Availability and Affordability Act. This plan consists of targeted investments in families and small businesses. It modernizes three existing tax credits to reflect the current economic reality.

This is an example of good, common-sense policymaking. We are not creating a new entitlement; we are letting Americans keep more of their hard-earned taxpayer dollars in a manner that actually grows the economy, and we are offering job creators an incentive to invest directly in their hard-working people who have childcare needs, and those benefits would help.

These tax credits have not been updated since 2001, so almost 25 years ago. Unfortunately, inaction by Congress has contributed to the crisis. The American economy loses \$122 billion a year because of the lack of affordable childcare. In contrast, my bill would cost just over \$4 billion a year. You can do that math.

Imagine the boost to our economy if we made this targeted investment in workers and in families. Consider a parent who may be a low-income individual, many of whom find the high cost of childcare to be the single biggest barrier to reentering the workforce. We could empower those parents to get back to work and move off government assistance.

This is exactly the kind of pro-family, pro-Main Street, pro-worker legislation that has the ability to both transform our economy and support families.

I want to thank my colleagues who have already signed on—most recently, the senior Senator from Alabama, TOMMY TUBERVILLE, and the senior Senator from Arizona, MARK KELLY.

I am encouraged by the amount of support this legislation continues to build, but we can't stop now. They are counting on Republicans—the American people—to be that party of families, party of parents, party of hard-working Americans, and to actually deliver. I believe the American people are firmly behind us, and I want to encourage all of my colleagues to join with me in this effort.

We are elected to serve the needs of our constituents, and when the American people speak out about those needs, we have an obligation to listen and to do something about it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

#### TRIBUTE TO KELSIE DANIELL

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, today, I stand here to recognize small business. Actually, today, I rise to recognize Kelsie Daniell.

Kelsie began working in my office 7 years ago, as a press secretary, and quickly proved herself, moving up to communications director and now deputy chief of staff for communications and policy. In an era of title inflation, that title doesn't encompass nearly all that Kelsie does. She truly is the glue that holds my operation together.

We all come to Washington focused on the things we really want to tackle but quickly realize that even the best planned day can quickly take unexpected twists and turns.

There are also fires to put out, and I have been fortunate to have Kelsie's

steady hand and solid counsel to count on. No matter the assignment or situation, just like her favorite meme, "This is fine"—"This is fine"—she always responds this way and calmly goes about her work.

However, most days, she is anticipating what could go wrong and getting ahead of it. She is able to put out fires, sometimes even before they start. She has already figured out how to handle the hot topics of the day, while preparing for tomorrow. We all know, if there is a problem, we can turn to Kelsie and say, "Please, fix," and the job gets done.

She is as precise as a fine-tooth comb, from pulling off press conferences abroad to wacky floor speeches, and, of course, my day-to-day operations. Kelsie is relentless in ensuring perfection in execution.

In fact, Kelsie, my staff was very nervous about surprising you today with this speech—because she hadn't edited it. That is because she always puts the finishing touches on every project that makes it better.

She has the same impact on all of us around her. She always brings up everyone by making each of us stronger, myself included.

Whether driving river to river, across Iowa, or navigating the Halls of Congress, she never, ever slows down, including when she brought one of those walking treadmills for her desk in DC. She has even led our staff in Tabata training.

Mr. President, if you have been through that, it is hellacious.

And, of course, watch out for Kelsie if you are facing off against her in pickleball.

Even while keeping us all on track, somehow, she has always found the time to pour into the people around her as a mentor and as a friend.

She is actively involved in her church, and she became a mother during the Iowa caucus.

Her commitment to excellence and drive to always push harder is a true testament to her leadership—characteristics that she has infused into my office and will take with her in whatever she sets her sights on. It is a mindset for us all to aspire to as we prepare for whatever the day brings us.

And as she likes to say before any meeting ends, "one more thing": Kelsie, I will miss your wise counsel, and I am so thankful for your friendship. I know you will continue excelling at everything you do, and I am grateful beyond words for everything you have done for me and on behalf of my Iowans.

So God bless you, Kelsie, in your journeys.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

## MEDICAID

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise today to urge my colleagues to oppose any proposals to take healthcare coverage away from the American people who need it most.

Today, the House Energy and Commerce Committee is marking up a section of what is called their budget reconciliation bill, which would reduce spending by \$912 billion over 10 years. That is a lot of money. Out of that, \$715 billion would come from Medicaid and other healthcare programs that are essential to Americans, children, and our most vulnerable families.

House Republicans say that these cuts are about waste, fraud, and abuse—but the real fraud is telling the American people that by implementing these requirements, that somehow these policies are going to save money.

The truth is, it is just making it harder on Americans to stay on Medicaid. A Medicaid program that even the Seattle Times has said cutting it could hurt our State's poor and our children.

So is that what we are trying to do, give a tax break to corporations and billionaires by cutting the effects of Medicaid on poor people and children?

The proposed work requirements basically make Medicaid beneficiaries submit paperwork every month to prove that they are working at least 80 hours a month, but we already know that 64 percent of Medicaid beneficiaries are working. That is what the big fraud is. This chart right here shows that people who couldn't find other affordable health insurance and are working full-time is 44 percent of Medicaid adult recipients.

Some are not working because of their inabilities and due to retirement. So 8 percent of them are not doing that, 20 percent are working part time, 12 percent we basically said it is better for you to be a caregiver and provide the caregiving, and we will cover your health insurance costs so you can provide the caregiving because that way the families stay in the home instead of going to their nursing home, which would cost all of us a ton more amount of money. So they are working.

There are 10 percent not working due to illness or disability, and some are not working because we are smart enough to let people who go to school, but don't have the ability to get affordable insurance, allow some percentage, a small percentage of them to be on Medicaid too.

So what is it that the House is really trying to say? They are really trying to sneak in a massive cut to Medicaid that will shut down hospitals, kick people off of Medicaid, make them go to emergency rooms, cost us all more money, and do nothing but perpetrate a fraud. When in reality, people are working and those that aren't working, we are happy that they are not working because one—could be due to an illness, or they are a caregiver, or they are working part time.

So all of these issues show that the House isn't serious. In 2018, another State tried this, "Oh, brilliant idea. We're going to make a work requirement." Now, if I hadn't been in the U.S. Senate at the same time the House of Representatives tried another canard—"Oh, we're going to block grant Medicaid. We're going to block grant it and it's going to be great, and then we're going to save money."

No, no, the hospitals, the Republican county commissioners, the jails—everybody basically said, "Don't do that. You're going to cut Medicaid—you're going to decimate the safety net that makes healthcare work in our communities. Don't do it." And because we had three Republicans join us, we were able to stop that ridiculous idea of block granting Medicaid.

But in 2018, Arkansas tried the same thing that the House of Representatives are now suggesting. They became the first State to establish a work requirement for certain Medicaid enrollees. It took just 4 months, and the new requirement got 18,000 people kicked off Medicaid.

Where do you think those people go? You think they don't have any healthcare needs? You don't think they go to the hospital and cost us all a bunch load more money? That is what they do. They cost all of us a bunch load more money.

A Federal court ruling stopped Arkansas from implementing that rule a year later because it disrupted so many people because of the work requirement.

And after that, a Harvard University study found that Arkansas' work requirement didn't lead to more people getting jobs. It actually took away their health insurance, and then they didn't have the ability to stay as healthy and get jobs. So is that what is going to happen across our country, to my State, all because the Republicans are putting this nonsensical idea on the table?

Still, the issue is that other States tried the same thing, and other States also stopped their ridiculous idea. So this isn't something that works, and according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, more than 780,000 Washingtonians could be subject to a work requirement and are at risk of having their coverage taken away.

Now, I am already done fighting with the DOGE people who basically said, "Oh, waste, fraud and abuse, and Social Security." Really? My constituent not only had his Social Security benefits cut; they said he was dead. He wasn't dead. And not only did he go there, wait in line, crummy service, and say that he wasn't dead—they still, after that—after he notified Social Security and told him he wasn't dead, and I want my Social Security, they had the audacity to go back into his bank account and claw back money out of his bank account, still saying that he was dead.

Now, is that what really the House of Representatives wants us to do, harass

the heck out of 780,000 Washingtonians to write a proposal every month, telling them they are somehow doing something? Or do we want to set up a program to cover those who can't get affordable insurance and cover them because we don't want to pay the extra costs at the emergency room?

That is what we are trying to say. We don't want to pay the extra costs. So this proposal just doesn't make sense, and so I am not surprised that I got a copy of a letter passed on by health officials in my State that said, "The undersigned here are writing to you to oppose any cuts to the Medicaid rates, any adjustments to the federal Medicaid assistance program, to our healthcare systems, or changes to the direct payment programs."

Well, what is surprising about this is it is signed by the Republican county commissioners, the Republican State representatives. The people in that community who know what it takes to build a healthy community, they sent a letter basically saying, Don't do the very things that the House of Representatives just did.

My own constituents, bipartisan Republicans and Democrats, though, already said, Don't do this because you will cut the legs out from under us. We won't have rural hospitals. And just think about all the jails that are dealing with the opioid and fentanyl epidemic, and now, all of a sudden, you are taking Medicaid away from them. What are they going to do? You are going to make all those people go to an emergency room? Now, all of our emergency rooms, instead of these people being in a detention facility, are all going to be in an emergency room crowding us all out from getting healthcare?

So this idea is ridiculous, and people all across my State are already speaking out about the choices or lack thereof. I spoke to a Medicaid patient in eastern Washington who was worried that she wouldn't be able to be supported when she needed to go to a nursing home because where is all the money going to go?

We are trying to save enough money by putting people on Medicaid, so the people who do need to go to a facility can, but a resident told me that without Medicaid, her father wouldn't have been able to afford treatment or medication for his mental health issues.

So that is really what we want to do? Give a tax break to wealthy, wealthy people and to corporations, just so we can be kicking poor people off of Medicaid?

So I hope our colleagues will not allow this to happen. I hope that our Senate colleagues will be ready to show that the defeat of the fentanyl epidemic needs to be addressed, and helping Medicaid continue with substance abuse treatment is key.

Recent polls show that 77 percent of Americans have a favorable view of Medicaid, including 64 percent of Republicans. And as I said, last week, I