

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

met with the healthcare providers, mostly from central Washington, who said, "You literally will take away essential revenue that keeps our hospitals open, and our State could see five to seven hospitals close."

That is not what we want to see out of a budget proposal to give a tax break to wealthy corporations and individuals. So I ask my colleagues to make sure that we are fighting these cuts to Medicaid. Our communities are demanding it. They are watching, and just like with the block granting of Medicaid, they are not going to believe another idea that has already been tried and failed and doesn't even meet the goals of being successful in making the most affordable healthcare possible and keeping the cost down on all of us.

I urge my colleagues to reject this House proposal on Medicaid.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

REMEMBERING CHRISTOPHER S. BOND

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I rise for two things. First, I wanted to make the Chamber aware of the passing of legendary Missouri Senator Kit Bond.

Former Senator Bond served as Missouri's Governor. He was I think at the time Missouri's youngest Governor and still is historically. He served in this Chamber for 24 years—one of the longest serving Senators from my State.

I have the honor of standing behind, I suppose, the desk that he once had, that Harry Truman had, that Tom Eagleton had, Jack Danforth had, Roy Blunt had, and Senator Bond.

He had a flare, a sense of humor, and an intense dedication for delivering for his home State. He will be missed. I am praying for him, his wife Linda, his son Sam, and all those who knew and loved Senator Bond, during this difficult time.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST—EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The second reason I rise, Mr. President, is to seek unanimous consent regarding the nomination of Mr. Brian Burch to be U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican.

The last few weeks have been a whirlwind for Catholics. I had the honor of representing my country, along with four other Senators, at the Vatican for the funeral of Pope Francis. As the first Republican Catholic elected to the Senate from my State, it was certainly an honor, a somber day.

Of course, the conclave then happened, and we now have Pope Leo XIV. He will be installed formally this weekend, which is why I am rising to have this Ambassador approved by the Senate before this weekend so that he can maybe attend as the Ambassador.

Of course, Pope Leo is the first American elected Pope, which is significant and historic. He is from Chicago.

I will note that at my 5 o'clock mass this weekend, during homily, it was made clear that although he is from Chicago, he is not a Cubs fan. So as a Cardinals fan, that was reassuring to know.

But it is a historic time for Catholics, and I think it is important to have this relationship with the Holy See and with the Vatican. It is critical for our country. I think it is important to move forward with this nomination.

Brian is a devoted husband and father to his wife Sara and their nine children. Brian and his wife are raising their family in the greater Chicago area. Ironically, our new Pope was raised there. He is also the cofounder of CatholicVote, a national, faith-based, advocacy organization whose mission has inspired every Catholic in America to live out the truths of the Catholic faith in public life. He has been very involved.

He is a deserving candidate. He has been passed out of the Foreign Relations Committee and would do a great job.

I think it is a very important statement for this Chamber to make to have this Ambassador approved by the Senate before this weekend.

With that, Mr. President, notwithstanding rule XXII, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the consideration of the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 100, Brian Burch to be Ambassador to the Holy See; that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate; that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I would like to explain what I am doing here.

I have a hold on nominees coming out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee because it has been almost 4 months since Donald Trump and Marco Rubio illegally and unilaterally shuttered the U.S. Agency for International Development under the guise of a so-called review, which should be done by now. This is in violation of the appropriations law, the Foreign Assistance Act, and probably the Impoundment Control Act.

Here is the thing: As a direct result—and it is not so common that you can say "as a direct result"—of something that was done by the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID, people are dying. Children are dying. Mothers are passing HIV-AIDS to their children. Disaster survivors are being stranded with nowhere to turn. All of this suffering is because of what the United States is doing, in contravention of their own laws.

So I will not expedite confirmation of State Department nominees until and unless this administration starts complying with the law and being accountable to Congress.

I want to make two other points here. I will stipulate that it would be a very nice time to send our Ambassador to the Holy See. It would be an auspicious time to do so. But let's under-

stand how hard it would be to do this in the normal course of business.

You file cloture. It is a cloture petition. The majority leader is in charge of it. You put it at the desk. You wait a day. You take a procedural vote. Two hours later, you take the final passage vote. You have your Ambassador. Why do I know this? Because we are doing this on nine other nominees this week.

So it was the choice of the Senate majority to prioritize the Chief of Protocol; the Legal Adviser for the Department of State; the Secretary of the Air Force; the Deputy Secretary of Energy; the Deputy Secretary of the Interior; the Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources; the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering; the Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget; and the Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

If this is a very important and time-sensitive confirmation, all we need to do is have the majority leader file a cloture petition, we wait 1 day, and then we vote. It is perfectly available to us, if that is an urgent matter, to just do this in the normal course of business.

As I was talking to the Senator from Missouri, with whom I have a pretty solid working relationship, I was explaining that when I was in the majority and we were trying to get confirmations through, I spent a fair amount of time talking to people who had holds. I would always go to their offices, sometimes catch them on the floor, sometimes go to the cloakroom, and say: Hey, what would it take to release this hold?

To this moment, not a single Member has walked up to me and said: What would it take to release the hold? Not the majority leader, not the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, not the Senator from Missouri, not anybody.

The normal way that the minority flexes its authority is to slow things down, even if it is slightly. And this is all this is—like a day, plus 2 hours. So if this is important, we can get it done this week. If it is important for me to release those holds, then somebody should come and talk to me. I remain ready and willing to talk to Leader Thune or any Republican colleague as we continue consideration of these nominees going forward.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. SCHMITT. Mr. President, I would like to address that.

If this were a blanket hold, if these weren't indiscriminate, maybe that would be productive, but these are indiscriminate holds.

I would offer to this body that not only is the Senate broken through this process and this ruse, the Democrats are broken.

By the way, you don't need to filibuster everything. You don't need 60