

of that will get worse—worse—under RFK, Jr.'s watch.

Now, it would be bad enough that a vote to confirm RFK, Jr., would be a vote to weaken America's healthcare system, but it gets even worse when you remember that a vote for RFK, Jr., is also a vote to elevate a conspiracy theorist to the top healthcare job in the country.

Mr. Kennedy has made a living not by promoting public health but, in his later years, by actively fighting it. RFK is the face of the modern anti-vax movement. He has spent decades profiting off vaccine misinformation, undermining public trust in a medical practice that has saved tens of millions of lives, if not hundreds of millions or more, for more than a century.

We need to take a moment to truly reckon with the dangers of putting a vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS.

Simply put, weakening vaccine standards could mean more people will die—more people will die. A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS could defund vaccine awareness campaigns that are led by organizations like the CDC. A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS could reshape the CDC's vaccine advisory board and alter which kinds of vaccines are required to be covered by insurance companies.

A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS would make our schools less safe. If fewer kids are required to be vaccinated against things like measles, the results will be sicker classrooms across America.

A vaccine skeptic in charge of HHS could weaken protections for vaccine and drugmakers from frivolous lawsuits.

These are just some of the dangers that come with putting a vaccine skeptic in charge of America's healthcare policy. It will set American healthcare back dramatically.

Of course, during his hearings, RFK, Jr., tried to run away from his fringe views. We heard the usual excuses you might expect from a nominee forced to answer for a terrible record. He suggested perhaps he was misquoted here and there or that he had been misunderstood or that he never meant to come across as anti-vaccine at all, and that, of course, he would follow the science. Well, give me a break. Are Senators supposed to believe that someone who has spent decades writing books and giving speeches and making trips around the world undermining vaccines has suddenly had this epiphany and come around on vaccines; that, suddenly, now that he has been nominated to lead HHS, he is fully on board with vaccines, and that we have nothing to worry about when it comes to his views? How convenient. Again, give me a break.

We should look less at RFK, Jr.'s eleventh-hour conversion and, instead, examine the things he has said again and again, going back decades. We should look at the way RFK, Jr., has used his powerful platform to spread

misinformation for years, like in 2023—not very long ago—when Mr. Kennedy went on FOX News and said:

I do believe autism does come from vaccines.

Or when Mr. Kennedy gave his speech at a conference linking the CDC vaccines division to "fascism."

Or like in 2021, when he said on a podcast:

Our job is to resist and to talk about vaccines to everyone. If I see someone on a hiking trail carrying a little baby and I say to him, "Better not get vaccinated."

And, of course, you could try reading Mr. Kennedy's numerous books against vaccines, like the one claiming parents have been misled on the measles vaccine. Or you could go to the online store of one of his anti-vaccine groups and check out the merchandise they sell for kids, like the onesie that says "Unvaxxed and Unafraid"—a onesie for a little one, putting this propaganda on him or her.

This last example is pretty revealing because it is not just that Mr. Kennedy embraces pseudoscience and conspiracy theories but that he has, in fact, profited off spreading misinformation. He has been involved with no fewer than five lawsuits filed by anti-vaccine groups against drug companies. In fact, his primary source of income from the last year came from the fees he collected by referring clients to a civil lawsuit against vaccines.

And, by the way, he didn't originally disclose those connections to ethics officials. Worse, he refused to give up his financial stake in any settlement agreement that comes from one of these lawsuits. That is stunning.

That means, right now, Republicans are on the brink of confirming a nominee to HHS who will be in charge of vaccine regulations in America and who at the same time stands to benefit from lawsuits against vaccines, financially.

Well, Donald Trump says he wants to get rid of the swamp. This is a textbook definition of "the swamp"—to benefit from lawsuits against vaccines while you are HHS Secretary and have power over which vaccines are needed and how they are distributed and talked about to the American people.

Now, let me repeat what I said a few weeks earlier. It fills me with such sadness, as well as a great deal of frustration and even anger. A few weeks ago, it seemed like Senate Republicans would have drawn the line on nominees like Robert Kennedy and Tulsi Gabbard. A few weeks ago, yes, indeed, it did seem like Senate Republicans, maybe, would have drawn the line on RF Kennedy, Jr., and Tulsi Gabbard. But, unfortunately, and, again, sadly, the past few days have been a stunning capitulation by Senate Republicans.

If the Senate had a secret ballot, I will bet you that Tulsi Gabbard would have gotten fewer than 10 votes and Robert Kennedy would not have come close to confirmation. My guess is a majority of the party on the other side

would have voted against him as well, as are all of us.

But, instead, Donald Trump is tightening his vice grip even further on Senate Republicans. What we are witnessing is leadership from one branch of government, withering under pressure from another, even to the point of confirming dangerously unfit individuals to positions of immense responsibility.

My Republican colleagues should think very carefully before they roll the dice on Mr. Kennedy. There is a very serious risk that, if confirmed, Mr. Kennedy will take steps that severely undermine public health, and then sooner or later public backlash is going to build, and Republicans will have wished they didn't sign their names to this troubling nominee.

So I implore my Republican colleagues, reject the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy to be Secretary of HHS. There are certainly better individuals for the job, even if many on our side may not agree with them politically.

But a vote to confirm Mr. Kennedy is a vote to make America sicker. A vote to confirm Mr. Kennedy is a vote to make America sicker. It is a vote to let pseudoscience dictate healthcare policy. It is a vote that will endanger the lives of the American people. And it is a vote, I truly believe, many, many Republicans will eventually deeply regret.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

#### NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today alongside Senator SCHUMER and Senator CORTEZ MASTO and so many others who have come to the floor today in opposition to the President's nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Secretary of Health and Human Services is the top health official in our country and is in charge of everything from preventing disease outbreaks to making sure our kids are healthy and have a good start in life.

Americans need and deserve a Secretary who is guided by facts and science in decision making. After all, this is someone who will be in charge of overseeing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's critical efforts to fight disease outbreaks; the Food and Drug Administration's work to ensure the safety of the medications Americans rely on and the food on our grocery shelves; the National Institutes of Health's ground breaking, life-saving medical research; the Administration for Community Living's support for older adults and people living with disabilities, as well as their families and caregivers; and the Administration for Children and Families' work to oversee the foster care system and child adoption programs—something I care deeply about as a cochair

of the adoption caucus for the U.S. Senate; as well as work to prevent human trafficking.

Through these efforts and more, the Department of Health and Human Services directly touches more lives, actually, than any other Cabinet Agency.

The building that houses the Department is named for Minnesota's "Happy Warrior," Vice President Hubert Humphrey, former U.S. Senator for the State of Minnesota. He was a champion for expanding access to healthcare, grew up in South Dakota, grew up at a drugstore, went on to get his degree at Minnesota and eventually became a U.S. Senator, always fighting for those—in his words—"in the shadows of life." Inscribed in the entrance hall of that building are words from Humphrey's final speech in 1977:

The moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick—

As well as, of course, those with disabilities.

That is the test for this Agency that is housed in the building with those words from the former Senator from my State, whose desk I actually have. I open it up, and I see his name, "Hubert H. Humphrey" carved into that desk.

You need someone as a Secretary of this Department that believes deeply in those words and believes in them with all the modern science and every tool we have to keep people healthy.

Robert Kennedy, Jr., does not pass that test.

Among the HHS Secretary's most important duties is ensuring American medical research remains on the cutting edge. Yet Mr. Kennedy's record reveals a consistent pattern of dismissing, distorting, and devaluing the very research that is critical to HHS's mission.

Among other things, the Secretary oversees the National Institutes of Health, which, for more than a century, has been a driving force behind such groundbreaking discoveries as blood tests to detect HIV and hepatitis, the use of lithium to manage bipolar disorder, and the HPV vaccine to prevent cervical cancer.

This administration has already displayed open hostility to medical research. Over the weekend, we learned that the administration intends to defund and derail lifesaving medical research.

Let's be clear about what is happening here. They are looking for money everywhere: Head Start program, firefighter grants. They are looking for money over at NIH with that lifesaving research. Why? Because the Republicans, led by Donald Trump, are about to reveal over \$2 trillion in tax cuts for the wealthy. We know because that was a campaign promise.

And in the process, they are extinguishing hope for so many Americans

looking for treatments and cures. That is why they are looking to cancel cancer trials and Head Start, to give tax cuts to their buddies.

Americans are already feeling the pain from this. I have constituents writing to me afraid and afraid for loved ones. I heard from one constituent over the weekend whose niece is fighting a very aggressive cancer but has been seeing results from an NIH-funded clinical trial. The niece has three small children at home while battling this disease. And without this trial, she doesn't know what else her physicians could do for her.

I have also heard from a constituent whose daughter got treatment at the NIH last year. She said it "was a great experience, with great doctors and services," but she can't imagine how patients enrolled in NIH studies for life-threatening conditions are feeling right now.

Another constituent told me one of her kids is living with a rare cancer, and the administration's directive to suspend NIH funding threatens the prognosis.

Simply put—

This constituent wrote—

this administration's policy will lead to many unnecessary deaths.

Everyone knows someone in their life who has benefited from that medical research.

For me, this is personal. I am standing here today because of one of the types of research that is on the chopping block, that is research on breast cancer. As many of our colleagues know, following a routine mammogram in February of 2021, I learned that I had stage IA breast cancer. I am lucky I only had stage IA. I still remember what it felt like to walk in here about 15 minutes after finding out what the tests had shown, and I had to walk in here like everything was fine and vote.

But then after that, I got treatment at the Mayo Clinic. All I had to have was a lumpectomy and radiation—I never even had to go through chemo—and I was in remission. And when it popped up again, the same thing: lumpectomy, radiation, no chemo.

That would have never happened 50 years ago. That would have never happened 25 years ago. That was because of research.

There are many in this Chamber, who either themselves or who have loved ones who have had cancer who have gotten through it successfully because of the research that occurred years and years back because our Nation decided we want to be in the lead. We are not going to be a follower. We are going to be in the lead when it comes to lifesaving research. We are going to do it in our great universities and medical institutions all over this country, and we are going to make sure that we put the funding into that research.

Not just Democrats said this—no, quite the contrary. All of these moves to invest in NIH and to understand how

that research just can't occur in one place with a famous name but has to occur all over the country—that was bipartisan work, under Presidents that have been both Democratic and Republican. And we have built that research, and we are now on the cusp of finding out not just ways to make this easier to deal with and easier treatments and to go into remission, but ways to eradicate this once and for all. We are on the cusp of that with the mapping of the human genome and with all the information that we have gotten out of that.

We have seen what this has done for America. It has put us in the lead. Studies have shown that every dollar in NIH funding spurs almost \$2.50 in economic activity. NIH funding supports hundreds of thousands of jobs across the country and pumps more than \$92 billion into our economy. This includes generating \$1.7 billion of economic activity and supporting over 2,500 businesses and nearly 8,000 jobs in my State alone.

I have heard from a number of constituents who are researchers, who solve things—scientists, entrepreneurs, a microbiology lab technician. One is worried that blocking Federal research funding will put their research on hold and prevent her from employing lab personnel.

This administration's reckless freeze on NIH funding is a threat to not just jobs but to those lifesaving cures. It will extinguish hopes. It will extinguish what will be lives that will come after that and after that. It will set back American innovation and put us at a competitive disadvantage with countries like China. And this is just the beginning of the assault on healthcare.

So it will be the HHS Secretary's job to push back against these attacks. I haven't seen that happen—not with this nominee. Mr. Kennedy has demonstrated open hostility to science.

At an event in Arizona, days before the President nominated him, Mr. Kennedy said that "600 people are going to"—this is his quote—"walk into offices at NIH and 600 people are going to leave."

On top of his desire to deprive our government of the great work done every day by the men and women who keep Americans healthy, Mr. Kennedy has expressed his intent to roll back the Agency's focus on combating infectious diseases and remove funding that improves our understanding of how, why, and where diseases are spreading.

Don't take my word for this, if you want; just take his. These are quotes.

I'm going to say to NIH scientists—

He said—

we're going to give infectious disease a break for about eight years.

That is his plan for overseeing the NIH: give infectious disease a break.

Well, Mr. President, measles doesn't take a break. Tuberculosis doesn't take a break. Polio doesn't take a break.

And the reason we have largely eliminated those diseases in this country is because medical research can never take a break.

Unfortunately, Mr. Kennedy's animosity toward the NIH does not come to us in a vacuum. He has long been a vocal opponent of medical research. When influential voices promote the idea that data-backed, evidence-based research is unreliable, it breaks down trust in medicine and public health science as a whole. To place Mr. Kennedy atop our Nation's largest public health Agency is to provide this voice of constantly questioning science and telling parents they shouldn't get their kids vaccinated—it gives that voice a megaphone.

People are welcome to their opinion. Certainly, they are in this Chamber and walking down the street. That is fine. This is America. But it is giving this voice that is not based in science a megaphone.

For generations, America has led the way on medical research and global health. Our Nation's scientists gave the world penicillin, anesthesia, the pacemaker, and more. Mr. Kennedy's nomination puts decades worth of scientific advancement at risk—so much so, in fact, that the Wall Street Journal editorial board, not exactly a bastion of liberalism, called it “a threat to American medical innovation.”

Of course, Mr. Kennedy's opposition to science is hardly a secret. Over the years, he has repeatedly chosen to ignore scientific evidence in favor of conspiracy theories, most notably those involving vaccines.

Let me be absolutely clear on this: Vaccines are among the greatest achievement of modern science, and the evidence supporting their safety is overwhelming. Vaccines have saved 154 million lives over the last half century. That is about six lives every minute. And each life saved gains an average of 66 years of health.

In spite of that, Mr. Kennedy has long promoted baseless theories about vaccines, including, most notably, during the pandemic. During a period in our Nation and world history when trust in science was more important than ever, Mr. Kennedy, instead, chose to stir up doubts about lifesaving vaccines. Mr. Kennedy actively sought to halt the rollout of the vaccines just 6 months after President Trump—the same President who has now nominated him to oversee healthcare in our country—declared the vaccines a miracle. That is from President Trump. You all remember those days when we were trying to get the vaccines out as soon as possible.

In May 2021, Mr. Kennedy filed a petition with the FDA demanding that the Agency end authorization for the vaccines and avoid approving any future COVID vaccine.

Mr. Kennedy's denial of basic science goes beyond his opinions on vaccines. He has, on numerous occasions, spread misinformation about the origins of

diseases, claiming without evidence that humans, rather than bacteria or viruses, cause infectious diseases. For example, he has claimed that Lyme disease, which is spread by ticks—a big deal in Minnesota—he claims it was created by the U.S. military in a lab on Long Island in the 1950s. The fact is that the bacteria that causes Lyme disease has been around for at least 60,000 years, and the ticks that spread the disease have been around for at least 99 million years.

I also want to bring attention to Mr. Kennedy's denial of avian flu—key for me on the Agriculture Committee. Last year, Mr. Kennedy said the World Health Organization “fabricated the 2006 bird flu outbreak, which of course never happened.” This is what he said.

Now, my State is the largest producer of turkeys, and Minnesota turkey farmers will tell you that avian flu isn't fabricated; it is all too real.

I remember hugging a turkey producer who had just had to eradicate all of his birds. He was so proud of the operation he had. He was a small turkey producer. Just like that, because of the avian flu, he had to eradicate and kill those birds.

I have heard from one constituent who teaches farm business management at a rural Minnesota community college. Several of his students are turkey farmers, and they have seen firsthand the devastating impact of that bird flu virus when it comes in: A turkey dies. They know it is trouble. They get it tested. They know it is going to go to the whole flock and beyond, and they have to take immediate action.

Part of the result of that is, of course, higher prices at the grocery store. When my constituent met with his students to complete their 2025 cash flow projections, he said:

It was devastating to see the results, and I have great concerns that this virus may cause bankruptcy for turkey farmers.

We all know that those young farmers are not alone. For 3 years now, poultry farmers in my State and across the country have been fighting a new outbreak of avian flu, which has affected 156 million birds and counting.

Following the 2015 avian flu outbreak, our colleague Senator CORNYN and I worked to establish an animal vaccine bank and disease response program as part of the 2018 farm bill. This has given farmers and public health agencies critical resources for containing outbreaks, but it is clear we need to be doing more, not less. That is why I am working with Senator BOOZMAN. I hope we can pass a farm bill and really upgrade our work when it comes to avian flu.

But to do all that and the potential of having vaccines here for various animals, we are going to need people in the government that believe in science. Placing Mr. Kennedy in charge of public health in our country could unravel that progress and more. He has already said he didn't believe in the avian flu, that it was somehow manufactured.

What more evidence do you need, I say to my colleagues across the aisle?

Facts are the foundation of medical science, and our next HHS Secretary must commit to making decisions based on facts, not personal beliefs.

I also have concerns that Mr. Kennedy will be a rubberstamp for the administration's plans to undo the progress that we have made on bringing down the sky-high costs of prescription drugs. For decades, Big Pharma companies had a sweetheart deal written into law that allowed them to charge our seniors whatever they wanted for lifesaving prescription drugs.

That was unacceptable, and, along with my colleagues, we successfully led the legislation to end it. Taking on the big drug companies wasn't easy. I did for years and years and years. They had three lobbyists for every Member of Congress and spent hundreds of millions of dollars—I am sure many watching tonight have seen those ads—trying to stop us. That was a great deal that got written into law. I don't know how they got it, but they got it.

Then we said: Wait a minute. Why are these drugs in other industrialized nations half the price of the drugs that we have in America, especially when we paid for a lot of the research with our taxpayer money? Then we found out, well, for the biggest drug-buying group in the country for prescription drugs—our seniors—they get locked-in profits on that, not like the VA, where they can actually negotiate for our brave veterans. But when it comes to all the seniors, no negotiation was allowed.

The power of over 50 million American seniors negotiating, that is a pretty strong bloc. And our constituents finally said: Enough is enough—major issues when people were running for office. And together, we ended Big Pharma's sweetheart deal—Democrats only—in the Inflation Reduction Act and gave Medicare the power to negotiate better prices for prescription drugs.

So what was the result of that? Well, already, the last administration negotiated the first 10 drugs—blockbuster drugs: Eliquis, Xarelto, Januvia, Jardiance. The negotiated prices that they negotiated with Big Pharma—because if Big Pharma didn't negotiate with them, they were then not going to be able to sell their drugs through Medicare. Do you know what prices they got?

Big Pharma is still suing. They have lost every single lawsuit saying that we, in this body, didn't have the power—didn't have the power—to stop the sweetheart deal that Congress had given them. Of course, we had the power.

But do you know what happened with those negotiated prices for seniors? They went down on those—just the first 10 blockbuster drugs—60, 70 percent. And no one has questioned the statistic that in 1 year, when this takes

effect—in about a year—9 million seniors across the country, in 1 year—just 1 year—will save \$1.5 billion in out-of-pocket costs. That is “b,” billion.

That is not all we did, because the next drugs are coming down the pike for negotiations—I will mention that in a minute—and the next ones after that and the next ones after that. The torch has been passed on to this administration. It is their turn to negotiate and get those 60 percent, 70 percent, 80 percent reductions like Secretary Becerra and the Biden administration were able to get because they were organized, because they knew what they were doing, and they stood tall and they negotiated those prices after we passed the law.

What else did we do? The legislation passed under the last administration capped monthly insulin costs for seniors at \$35, capped total out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors at \$2,000 a year, starting this year. And these savings are just the beginning. Last month, the previous administration announced the next 15 drugs Medicare must negotiate. These are more blockbusters: diabetes and weight loss drugs like Ozempic, Rybelsus, Wegovy, which 2.3 million Medicare Part D enrollees take, including thousands of seniors in my State.

For these seniors, getting those lower prices—you know how much those drugs cost right now—makes a huge difference.

Finally, seniors in America—and, by the way, it helps nonseniors as well. We already see the insulin prices lowered by the companies. Even though the law—I would have liked to pass a law for nonseniors. Our colleagues wouldn't join us in doing that. But the market worked, and they are also getting that \$35-per-month cap.

Think about what these next drugs will mean, though. Minnesotans like Brian—Brian has been paying more than a hundred bucks a month for Breo Ellipta, one of the asthma medications covered in last month's announcement for the drugs of the Trump administration—it is now on their plate to negotiate. Brian has been taking that for 20 years. After all that, \$24,000 spent on just one medication, think about if that was reduced 60 to 70 percent. That is what they could do if they have the right HHS Secretary.

Judith pays \$1,100 a month for Otezla, an arthritis drug also covered in last month's announcement. That is two-thirds of her Social Security check.

Relief could be on the way for Judith, for Brian, and for millions of seniors like them, but only if this administration follows the law and commits to continuing Medicare drug price negotiation.

This task, of course, doesn't fall to the Veterans Secretary, doesn't fall to the Commerce Secretary; it is the HHS Secretary. And I know I speak for many of my colleagues when I say I have serious doubts about this nominee when it comes to this.

Why? Well, to discuss Mr. Kennedy's testimony before the Finance Com-

mittee last week and his responses to questions submitted in writing, he could even have clarified it in writing.

What did he say? Our colleague Senator CORTEZ MASTO, who just spoke, pointed out that the President, our Republican colleagues, and Big Pharma wanted to repeal the law we passed—that is the Inflation Reduction Act—that contains the Medicare negotiation. She asked Mr. Kennedy if he would commit to following the law and negotiate a good deal for our seniors.

This is his response:

President Trump has asked me to end the chronic disease epidemic and make Americans healthy again.

Oh, come on. It is a very straightforward question. Congress passed a law. The former President signed it into law. It is the law that you have to follow, and the law says you have to negotiate these drug prices—not to mention that your Attorney General is going to have to defend the lawsuits that Big Pharma is bringing to try to upend the law that they are losing left and right, and you sure better continue the track record of the Biden administration and win those cases.

So when CATHERINE CORTEZ MASTO received this answer, which was a non-answer, in fact, he actually said something that makes you think, is he really going to follow the law and negotiate a good deal for our seniors? So she asked him to clarify his comments.

His response:

President Trump asked me to end that.

End what? I don't know. That is not leadership. He should have known all about the prescription drug program and Medicare Part D. He is taking over a major Agency that does this work for 50 million seniors under Medicare—50 million seniors. Out-of-pocket savings of \$1.5 billion in just 1 year on only the first 10 drugs, and then there are going to be 15 more and 15 more and 15 more.

This is not the answer of someone who is prepared to stand up and lower drug prices; that is the answer of someone who will do whatever the President asks him to do, no questions asked.

Mr. Kennedy was also given the chance to provide clarity by answering our colleagues' questions in writing. Yet he refused to give clear answers to the vast majority of the questions.

When asked if he would refrain from making policy changes that would raise drug costs for seniors with cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, psoriasis, rheumatoid arthritis, or chronic kidney disease, Mr. Kennedy refused to answer. He also refused to provide a clear answer when asked if he supported policies that hold Big Pharma companies accountable for price gouging.

From the person nominated to shape health policy in our country for the next 4 years, we need someone who will commit to bringing down drug costs. This is particularly important after the actions the administration has taken in the last few weeks.

On his first day in office, the President signed an Executive order that

cut Affordable Care Act enrollment periods short and reversed policies that make it affordable for parents to add their kids to their health insurance. He is also making it harder for 24 million people to keep coverage year to year by revoking automatic reenrollment in affordable healthcare plans.

The Affordable Care Act is the law of the land whether the President likes it or not, and the Secretary of Health and Human Services must follow the law because, guess what, also, the American people like this law. But when Mr. Kennedy was asked about the Affordable Care Act, he attacked it, saying “Americans don't like it” instead of promising to uphold the law.

The President's efforts to overturn the ACA are only the beginning. He is also taking away new initiatives that lower prescription drug prices, including one that offers seniors a flat \$2 copay for drugs that treat common chronic conditions.

In less than a month, this administration has made clear that it intends to do Big Pharma's bidding instead of sticking to commonsense policies that have brought down healthcare costs. Reversing them won't bring down prices; it will raise them.

We have problems with healthcare access, costs, and the like, so we need someone at the HHS who is actually going to work with us to take this down. Whether it is the denial of care for way too many patients under insurance policies or whether it is the expense of these prescription drugs, where still more work needs to be done on patents and some of the reforms on a bipartisan basis that we have gotten out of Judiciary, we need an HHS Secretary that supports reform, and by reform, I mean bringing down prices.

If you have been able to keep your healthcare coverage year to year through the Affordable Care Act, then this nominee will not fight for you. If you are a young adult who has been able to stay on their parents' healthcare until you are 26, don't look at this nominee to fight for you. If you are a senior shelling out thousands of dollars a month because of that sweetheart deal I just mentioned, he is not going to fight for you. He wouldn't even answer the question on whether he was going to keep negotiating.

None of this that he has talked about in these hearings, from my perspective, whether it is a rubberstamp for withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization, whether it is upending the work of the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, whether it is what I have just spoken about tonight about not believing in vaccines or not carrying on the work of negotiating prescription drugs, none of this will bring down healthcare costs. None of this will make Americans healthier.

President Eisenhower, who established the Agency that is now HHS—President Eisenhower, a trusted Republican President—said in his 1954 State

of the Union Address that the Department “symbolized the government’s permanent concern with the human problems of our citizens.”

The person at the helm of this Department must above all share that concern that President Eisenhower put out there so clearly. He must prioritize the well-being of his fellow Americans, must be guided by facts and science, not politics or personal opinions. That is why 17,000 doctors have sounded the alarm about Mr. Kennedy’s nomination. It is why more than 700 public health experts called his nomination “dangerous.” It is why, for the first time in living memory, more than 70 Nobel Prize winners across the fields of medicine, chemistry, physics, and economics came together in public opposition to this Cabinet pick.

I believe in listening to experts. I trust doctors. I trust public health researchers. I trust Nobel Prize winners. That is why, on behalf of every senior who relies on medications to live and age with dignity, every child who deserves the promise of a future free from preventable diseases, and every American whose health and safety depend on sound scientific guidance, I will be voting no on his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do what they know is the right thing and vote no as well.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin.

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. President, I rise today in opposition to Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.’s nomination to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

Healthcare is not just a policy to me; it is deeply personal. I got into public service because of my own healthcare journey. When I was 9, I was hospitalized with a serious childhood illness. It was similar to spinal meningitis—that wasn’t the exact diagnosis but similar. While I fought to survive and then ultimately to get better and fully recover, my grandparents, who raised me, struggled to figure out how to pay for the lifesaving care that I needed and received. In total, I spent 3 months in the hospital in Madison, WI.

When I talk about healthcare, I don’t just speak as a U.S. Senator or as a Wisconsinite; I am speaking as a person who knows what it was like to spend months in a hospital bed. I am speaking as someone who knows the emotional toll and the financial stress that it put on my loved ones. I am speaking as someone who knows firsthand how important it is to protect our children from serious illness and the dire consequences when our children do get sick. That is why I was so disturbed by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.’s nomination to lead our Nation’s largest public health Agency.

As a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I was able to question Mr. Kennedy at one of his nomination hearings. I watched as he over and over again parroted the same answer when

pressed about his anti-vaccine views. “Show me the data,” he would say. When asked if he still believes that vaccines cause autism, he would not commit. He again said, “Show me the data.”

Well, Mr. Kennedy has had every opportunity to review the overwhelming consensus of doctors, researchers, and experts that vaccines are safe and effective. He certainly had the opportunity to do so not just before his confirmation hearing but before spending a decade peddling misinformation and conspiracy theories about vaccines.

Apparently, he didn’t look at the research before traveling to Samoa to rail against the measles vaccine. Perhaps if he had, the 83 people—primarily infants and children—who died from a subsequent outbreak of measles would still be with us.

I think it is clear that he also didn’t bother to review the research before spreading misinformation online, with one study finding that among verified Twitter accounts, Mr. Kennedy was by far the top purveyor of vaccine misinformation, garnering more than three times as much engagement as the second most retweeted account.

Now, we are supposed to believe that if we simply show Mr. Kennedy the research, he will change his tune. Well, I believe someone applying to be the top health official in this country shouldn’t have to be convinced to follow the science. We shouldn’t have to hold their feet to the fire on whether they would be willing to protect our children from polio or measles. They should already be an expert in the field, not an expert at evading responsibility and spreading conspiracy theories.

Americans deserve a leading health official who believes in science, not in conspiracies. If Mr. Kennedy is not willing to believe or even review the overwhelming data on vaccines before spreading dangerous lies about their safety, then I highly doubt he will change his tune when leading the Department of Health and Human Services. And it is not just his statements like “No vaccine is safe and effective.”

By the way, he really did make that statement. I have seen it on a podcast. But he has repeatedly made claims with no evidence. He said Wi-Fi causes cancer. He said antidepressants caused school shootings. He questioned whether HIV does, in fact, cause AIDS. And time and again, he is showing us who he is. By his own admission, he is not interested in the research. He has no time for the data. And these claims may seem outlandish. They may seem harmless, but they all point to a fundamental truth about Mr. Kennedy. He not only does not believe the science, but he is willing to actively undermine it. He spreads dangerous conspiracy theories, and he puts families’ health and safety at risk.

RFK, Jr., will put Americans in harm’s way. Kids will be at risk of getting preventable diseases like measles

and mumps. Women will have essential healthcare ripped away. Families will be further away, not closer, to having cures to diseases like cancer. And, sadly, the list goes on and on.

So I urge my colleagues, especially those who understand how dangerous vaccine skepticism is, to ask themselves this simple question: Will this nominee keep your constituents safe? Or will he harm them?

For Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the answer is clear. I oppose this nomination on behalf of Wisconsin families and encourage my colleagues to vote no.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BANKS). The Senator from Georgia.

#### NOMINATION OF ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR.

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, I rise tonight in strong opposition to the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to lead the Department of Health and Human Services. It is no overstatement for me to say that it is hard for me to imagine a nominee less qualified that would actually be presented for the job of HHS Secretary. Robert F. Kennedy, not only does he not pass muster, this is not even close.

I still can’t believe we are even having this discussion. He is a conspiracy theorist who is so focused on his conspiracy theory. When you think of what we need the HHS Secretary to do, Robert F. Kennedy is a hazard to our health. Certainly, we can do better than this. He is just manifestly unqualified.

I don’t know how else to put it. This is not a partisan exercise for me. In fact, some of the nominees that have been presented, I voted for some of them. But I can’t vote for Robert F. Kennedy. Not only is he a hazard to our health, not only is he manifestly unqualified, it is clear that he will be a rubberstamp for Washington Republicans and their attempts to raise healthcare costs for hundreds of thousands of Georgians. He is a threat to public health and the thousands of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention employees who work tirelessly every single day to keep us safe.

He has enforced the administration’s gag order that is literally keeping medical professionals from sharing information to get diseases like bird flu under control, cancer researchers from doing their important, lifesaving work—who among us has not been touched in some way by cancer?—doctors and their ability and hospitals from accessing resources to lower the maternal mortality rate, which is abysmally high in this country, particularly in a State like Georgia. I will be voting no on Mr. Kennedy’s nomination to lead HHS, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to somehow find a way to do the right thing and vote no with me.

Mr. Kennedy won’t work to lower Georgians’ healthcare costs or increase