

The Senator from Montana says, yes, and if that involves even partially a consideration of Down syndrome, 5 years in prison.

I understand the compelling argument being made here, but there are compelling arguments to be made on both sides when it comes to this issue. If Republicans actually really wanted to help the Down syndrome community, they ought to focus on the issues that the community cares about.

How would I know those issues? I went to the National Down Syndrome Society and saw the list of their top legislative priorities.

No. 1, the top legislative priority for Down syndrome: Protecting Medicaid, No. 1, because it provides free health coverage for people with Down syndrome. And yet, we know what happened. This measure, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, was considered on the floor of the U.S. Senate, the future of Medicaid.

Every Republican Senator, including the Senator offering this provision, voted to cut Medicaid by \$1 trillion over the next several years.

I have checked in my State, downstate hospitals and clinics and doctors alike, and they said this is going to have a devastating impact on low-income individuals and individuals with disabilities. The National Down Syndrome Society knows that. That is why their highest priority—they would ask this Senate, this Congress, to function in this capacity, to protect Medicaid. But that is not the subject of the Senator's amendment before us today.

Their second priority at the National Down Syndrome Society is ending discrimination with organ transplantation.

And the third priority is important as well: Increasing funding for medical research at the National Institutes of Health.

That is the same appropriation which, for 2 successive years, Republican President Donald Trump has attempted to cut dramatically. Some restoration has taken place in Congress.

So the three highest priorities of the National Down Syndrome Society do not include the amendment coming before us today.

Whether or when or how to start a family is an important decision best left entirely to a woman, her family, her healthcare provider. The U.S. Senate should not be involved in that decision making. There is no Member of the Senate who I think is competent to judge someone else's circumstances and what is going through their mind when they make a critical medical decision like this one.

Today, we had a hearing, a spotlight hearing, on this issue, noting, as the Senator from Montana did, that we soon—tomorrow—will reach the fourth anniversary of the Dobbs decision.

There were two women there who testified about their pregnancies and the problems that they ran into. Coincidentally, they were both mothers of

children who were having subsequent babies, anxious to welcome those babies into the world, and then a sonogram disclosed terrible circumstances affecting that fetus.

One lady's situation in Texas was she had to carry a fetus to term that could not survive. It was anencephalic. She was required under Texas law because they don't want to even get close to the notion of ending a pregnancy prematurely—she waited, risking her own health until a deadline was reached set by the legislature in Texas.

Another lady, similar circumstance, a mother with a subsequent child, she thought everything was just fine, and the sonogram disclosed that the baby could not survive. That is a fact. That is a reality.

To generalize and suggest that people are making selfish or personal decisions is really unfair. Each circumstance really begs the question as to whether we, as legislators, have a better insight into what is proper for a person in those circumstances or not.

I think that this provision is not necessary. I believe that the Down Syndrome Society has listed their priorities, and this measure from the Senator of Montana is not one of them.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Mr. DURBIN. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

The Senator from Iowa.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 177

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, today, I join millions of Americans commemorating the Dobbs Supreme Court decision anniversary. We are united in two simple truths: Abortion is not a constitutional right, but life is. And life is a gift worth protecting. Each and every one of us was given this gift.

When we honor the dignity of every human being, we give them a chance to become loving sons and daughters, neighbors, and leaders.

This is not a political issue for me; it is deeply personal. Few things have brought me greater joy than when I first became a mother and, more recently, a grandmother. Holding my daughter and my grandson and watching them grow are memories I will always cherish. I want to protect and preserve this same experience for young mothers everywhere.

Last month, Stephanie, a constituent in Iowa, entrusted me with her story about the lasting effects of her abortion experience. With her permission, I am sharing her account, including the loss of her unborn child.

My daughter Lily died during an abortion procedure at 21 weeks. At the time, I was a young girl in crisis, frightened and unequipped to understand the full consequences of what I would experience afterwards. The effects did not end with the procedure itself. They affected me psychologically, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

At 17, I had very little language or support to help me understand those effects. I believe many women face similar trauma without diagnoses, treatment, or meaningful follow-up care. In the years since, I have experienced PTSD symptoms, grief, and significant emotional and hormonal changes after losing my child.

My concern extends beyond my own experience. There appears to be too little long-term follow-up care, too little research into women's post-abortion outcomes, and too little screening for trauma before and after abortion procedures, especially later term abortions.

Women should be better informed about possible mental, physical, and emotional effects and should have access to appropriate care when those effects arise.

On this solemn note, there is no doubt we can do better by women and mothers-to-be, and that is what my Protect Funding for Women's Healthcare Act is all about. My Protect Funding for Women's Healthcare Act prohibits taxpayer dollars from going to Planned Parenthood. Instead, the bill redirects those funds to women's healthcare providers and ensures no reduction in Federal funding for women's health services.

As I continue to protect the life-changing experience of becoming a mother, I want mothers and families to know that they are supported in pregnancy and beyond no matter their situation.

I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 177. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Massachusetts.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I rise today to object to the Senator from Iowa's legislation, which would defund Planned Parenthood—defund Planned Parenthood and prevent millions of men and women across the country from being able to access the healthcare which they need.

This bill, which targets the largest provider of reproductive care in this country, is part of my Republican colleagues' relentless efforts to undermine reproductive rights and further erode the health, the freedom, and the dignity of the American people.

Four years ago this week, the Supreme Court issued its Dobbs decision, tearing down nearly 50 years of constitutional protections and declaring

open season on American reproductive freedom.

Since then, Republicans got to work. States passed sweeping abortion bans. They peeled back protections for birth control. They created confusing, punitive, and terrifying schemes that have thrown patients into jail and charged their providers for simply receiving and providing basic medical care. And this is just the beginning.

Today, my Republican colleagues are again seeking to advance their anti-choice, anti-health, anti-family, anti-freedom agenda right here on the Senate floor. They want to strip funding from health centers that prescribe birth control. They want to strip funding from health centers that provide birth control, that treat infections, that screen for cancer—and, yes, that offer abortions. The result? Hundreds of closed clinics. Traveling farther to get care. Paying more or not getting care at all. Untreated illnesses. Delayed cancer diagnoses. I will not allow that to happen without a fight.

Let me be clear about where Republicans stand. Republicans will not protect the right to an abortion. Republicans will not protect the right to birth control. Republicans will not protect the right for Americans to decide their own futures. Instead, they will continue to pursue an agenda that is so offended by bodily autonomy that they would rather follow the extremism of the few than the will of the majority, who want their reproductive rights protected.

We must make the right to contraception the law of the land. Are you ready for me to say that again? We must make the right to contraception the law of the land before extremist judges and legislators further strip it away to advance their radical political agenda.

By the way, this is not some hypothetical. In his written opinion for the Dobbs decision, Justice Clarence Thomas on the Supreme Court of the United States urged the Court to overturn settled precedent and threaten the fundamental right to contraception.

We know what the “GOP” really stands for: “Gutting Our Protections.”

That is why I am again calling for the Senate to pass my Right to Contraception Act. This legislation would enshrine in Federal law the right to obtain and use contraception and put in place vital protections for providers.

The right to contraception shouldn't be a partisan issue. Americans of all parties overwhelmingly support it. It is central to an individual's health, well-being, life, liberty, equality, and economic and social freedom. It is a right grounded in the fundamental ability to make decisions about one's own body, one's own family, one's own future.

We must meet the clarity of their extremism with the clarity of justice. That is why I am out here on the floor of the Senate today—to make sure we debate that clarity which must be brought to this central issue of families' well-being all across our country.

Therefore, I ask that the consent be modified; that, instead, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged and the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of S. 422. Further, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be considered read a third time and passed and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there an objection to the modification?

The Senator from Iowa.

Ms. ERNST. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, claiming Republicans pose a threat to contraception is absurd. Despite fearmongering and election-year stunts from the left, over-the-counter daily oral contraceptive pills are available everywhere and have been for years.

Democrats have repeatedly made it clear that they want to control every aspect of your life—your healthcare, your job, your finances, and, yes, even your children.

To be clear, I support access to safe and effective contraception options for women. But that is not what Senator MARKEY's bill does. Instead, it attempts to provide drugs and sterilization procedures to minor children without parental consent. You do not need to be a parent or a grandparent to know this is profoundly wrong. It is dangerous, it is immoral, and it must be stopped.

Out of concern for every single child in this country, I cannot support this. Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

Is there an objection to the original request?

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. President, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The objection is heard.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Carolina.

#### UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUEST— S. 4872

Mr. BUDD. Mr. President, if you open a history book in any middle school classroom in America, you are going to find a very familiar pattern. Throughout history, societies have repeatedly decided that certain groups of people were exceptions to the promise of human dignity.

When we look back on those injustices, it seems almost impossible to understand how people could have accepted such profound disregard for human life. Yet history shows that these tragedies rarely begin with hatred alone; they begin with a more subtle idea that some human beings somehow fall outside the circle of protection owed to everyone else.

Every generation faces its own unique question about human dignity, which brings me to a question, and I would like my colleagues and the American people and especially the next generation of leaders—some of

them in this room today—the question is, Who deserves human dignity?

In the land of freedom and opportunity, we are constantly talking about equality, inclusion, and defending the most vulnerable, and we should ask those questions. I mean, those are fundamentally American values. But those ideas only mean something if they are applied consistently.

For 250 years, Americans have prided ourselves on being the voice of the voiceless, but for some reason, far too many fall silent when the dignity of the smallest and the most vulnerable members of our human race is questioned, and that is the unborn.

But human dignity is not conditional. It does not depend on age or size or ability or circumstance. Human dignity is inherent. It can't be earned. It can't be granted. It can't be taken away. And the most fundamental dignity we all possess is the right to life.

So if we aspire to be a nation that defends the equal dignity of every person, then our actions both at home and abroad must reflect the values we profess. The United States cannot credibly champion human rights while pursuing policies that deny the unborn the most basic right of all, and that is the right to life.

So as we approach the fourth anniversary of the ruling in Dobbs, there is more that we must do to defend the right to life. So I applaud the Trump administration for uncovering loopholes that previous administrations exploited to use U.S. foreign aid programs to fund and promote abortion abroad.

One of the greatest measures of American leadership is not merely the power that we profess, but it is the principles that we project. And it is the values we champion abroad that should reflect the values we share at home.

If human dignity is truly universal, then the foreign aid funded by American taxpayers must be consistent with our Nation's most fundamental truth, and that is that every human life possesses inherent dignity and that the first human right is the right to life.

That is why I have introduced the Protecting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance Act, so that we don't repeat history.

My bill would codify the Trump administration's efforts to once again put American values first in U.S. foreign assistance programs, preventing any future administration from using such programs as loopholes to deny life to the unborn.

One day, history will render its verdict on whether we choose to defend human dignity. It is my hope that future generations find that we remain faithful to America's first principle: that we are all created equal.

I ask unanimous consent that the Foreign Relations Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 4873 and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask that the bill be considered read a