

my husband was diagnosed. Eventually I left the workforce to care for him . . . and, of course, lost my employer-provided health insurance at the same time. The ACA has provided me with options ever since then; options that I never had before its passage. In 2014 I had three joints replaced; life changing surgeries that restored my active lifestyle and removed chronic pain from my life. These were only possible because I was able to access health insurance as an individual, at a reasonable cost.”

The Republican plan for increasing costs for older Americans threatens people just like Elisabeth.

These stories matter. These lives matter. We must all keep them in mind as we look to change the Affordable Care Act.

OPPOSE BILL REFORMING THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. BERA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BERA. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to urge all of my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to oppose this bill that repeals the Affordable Care Act, and here is why.

I stand here not as a Member of Congress, but as a doctor. When I took the oath to enter medicine, like thousands of other doctors, there are really three basic ethics in there:

Benevolence: to do good.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not do anything good. It makes it harder for people to get health care.

The second ethic was non-maleficence: to do no harm.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is going to harm millions of Americans. It is going to pull healthcare coverage away from folks. In fact, I have heard from folks who have come to my townhalls and have talked about how the Affordable Care Act has saved their lives. If you pull health care away from them, people are going to get sicker, and some people may potentially die.

And the third ethic is patient autonomy: the ability of patients to make the choices that impact their lives.

Mr. Speaker, this bill does not empower patients to make their own choices. This bill limits those choices. It takes choice away from them.

This is a bad bill that goes against everything that we in the medical profession swear to when we enter the profession. That is why you see doctors standing up and opposing this bill, hospitals opposing this bill, and health plans opposing this bill. That is why, when patients see what is in this bill, you will see American patients pushing back.

If you thought the townhalls have been boisterous over the last few months, just try to pass this bill and take necessary health care away from folks. You are going to see those patients showing up in your townhalls.

Let's talk about some of the good things that have happened in the Affordable Care Act. The Affordable Care Act expanded and made coverage for birth control much more readily available. That is a good thing. Whether you are anti-choice or pro-choice, like I am, it is a good thing. What we have seen by expanding coverage to birth control is the number of unintended pregnancies are near all-time lows. That is what we ought to be doing.

The Affordable Care Act expanded access to preventive health services. We know if we want to bring down the cost of health care, let's diagnose the cancer early. Let's treat it and let's save that life. Let's better manage disease.

Let's not go back to the old days where the patient showed up with the heart attack and then we went into action. That costs us a lot more. Let's prevent that heart attack. Let's provide better access to care.

Mr. Speaker, let's not make the President have to renege on a promise that he made. On the campaign trail and after being inaugurated, the President has said that any healthcare legislation was going to expand coverage, it was going to be cheaper, and it was going to be more accessible to patients.

We know this bill that is being introduced does none of that. It cuts coverage. It is going to be more costly for people and fewer people are going to get it.

Mr. Speaker, don't make the President have to renege and go against the promise that he made. The American public is going to hold him accountable for that.

Mr. Speaker, do the right thing. Let's put American patients first. That is what we as doctors do every day, and that is why, again, doctors are against it, hospitals are against it, and health plans are against it.

Mr. Speaker, let's reject this bill. I urge all my colleagues, Democrats and Republicans, to stand against this bill. It is a bad bill.

DESTABILIZING OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Washington (Ms. DELBENE) for 5 minutes.

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, last night, House Republicans released a dangerous and irresponsible bill that threatens to destabilize our Nation's healthcare system and rob millions of Americans of their health insurance plans.

Since coming to Congress, I have worked tirelessly to find commonsense fixes to our Nation's healthcare laws. We should be working together to build upon the reforms we have already made to expand coverage and reduce costs. But what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have put forward would make working families, seniors, children, and people with disabilities foot the bill for their poorly conceived experiment.

What is worse, they are giving our constituents and their Representatives in Congress less than 48 hours to review it before jamming it through committees.

As a former businesswoman and entrepreneur, I am always stunned to see leaders in Congress put forward a half-baked plan like this—one that threatens massive disruption and chaos, released in the middle of the night without any data or metrics to show how it makes literally anything better. In the private sector, that is the sort of behavior that can get you fired.

For a moment, let's put aside the fact that committees are planning to mark up this legislation tomorrow without any data from the Congressional Budget Office on how many of our constituents can expect to lose health coverage or see their taxes go up. Let's talk about the one thing we do know: this bill is an enormous tax cut for the wealthiest Americans.

Through this bill, Republicans are trying to give an average tax cut of around \$7 million to the 400 highest-income households—a tax cut they don't need and didn't ask for. They are doing it while ripping health insurance away from millions of hardworking Americans; forcing seniors to pay a staggering \$3,200 more on premiums every year, for less coverage; increasing the cost of prescription drugs for middle class families; eliminating coverage for women's health care, like birth control, breast cancer screenings, and maternity care; and decimating the Medicaid program for 62 million children and families, seniors, pregnant women, and people with disabilities.

This is hardly what I would call a great deal or a better way for the middle class, which is what the American people were repeatedly promised by President Trump and Speaker RYAN.

□ 1230

No, their idea of a healthcare plan is a tax cut for the wealthy at the expense of everyone else. When our healthcare system falls apart, we will all pay the price.

My in-box has been flooded with phone calls, emails, and letters from constituents who are terrified about what the Republicans are trying to do. Like Stacie, from Snoqualmie, who got coverage under the Washington State exchange after spending years struggling to pay for health care. She recently wrote to me and said: “Just last week I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I am terrified—not as much by the cancer, but by the thought that we might not be able to pay for health insurance.”

This bill spells disaster for people like Stacie. As her representative in Congress, I will not stand for it. I will fight every day to protect the reforms that have made health insurance accessible and affordable for her. We can't go back to a time when getting sick meant going bankrupt, and that is exactly what this legislation would do.