

look into your children's eyes—you have to look into your son's eyes, you have to look into your daughter's eyes, and you hope they don't see the worry in your eyes because you just got this letter. Now you are wondering how you will afford to take him or her to the doctor if he or she gets sick. These are often families with two working parents who, as I said, aren't lucky enough to work for an employer who provides insurance.

These are often families with children who have special needs. Like Crystal Lett and her son Noble, a first-grader in Dublin, OH, which is a suburb just west and northwest of Columbus. Crystal and her son Noble—I met them. This is obviously Noble. I met Noble and his mother Crystal in Washington this spring when they came all the way from Ohio to talk about what CHIP means to their family.

Noble was born with a rare genetic disorder. He needs three therapy sessions a week. He needs daily hormone injections to treat his condition. His medications run about \$1,500 a month.

I talked to Crystal again at the end of last month. She and her family are scared to death about what will happen to them if Congress doesn't save CHIP. She said CHIP is "the difference between living a middle class lifestyle, or being part of the poverty line." It is the difference between a middle-class lifestyle or being part of the poverty line.

Over the last several weeks, Congress was busy. Congress had the time to hand out massive tax cuts to the richest Americans and the biggest corporations but didn't have time to help these families. Some of you may have been in this Chamber a few nights ago when I pointed down the hall to Senator MCCONNELL's office, the Senate Republican leader, and described the lobbyists who went in and out of his office to get these tax breaks. It was the lobbyists from the oil companies and from the oil industry. There were lobbyists walking in and out of Senator MCCONNELL's office, the leader's office, from the tobacco companies. The lobbyists from the big drug companies and the lobbyists from Wall Street were going in and out of his office.

When you look down the hall to Senator MCCONNELL's office, do you know who didn't come out of his office? There were no lobbyists for the Children's Health Insurance Program because, you know what, children like Noble don't have lobbyists. They can't hire lobbyists. Parents are just hoping to keep their head above water because they have a child who needs medical attention, and any child obviously can need medical attention. That is the importance of CHIP.

So CHIP doesn't have a lobbyist. CHIP has people like Crystal Lett, who stands up for her family, who stands up for her children, but she can't come to Washington full time. She came here with a delegation from Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus.

Congress had time to hand out these massive tax cuts, but they don't have time for Noble Lett. It is a disgrace. It is a program that was bipartisan, and it has always been bipartisan. It was voted out of committee bipartisanly, but I guess the right crowd of lobbyists hasn't visited Senator MCCONNELL down the hall in his office. It is despicable.

We passed a bipartisan CHIP extension out of the Finance Committee. It is ready to go. If Republican leaders would put it on the floor today, it would pass. I assume it would pass with at least 90 votes. There is no excuse for this delay.

There is talk the House is going to pass a 3-month CHIP extension. We have never done that. We have extended CHIP 1 year, 2 years, 3 years. This is going to get a 5-year extension. That is what we ought to do. They are going to do a 3-month extension.

Three months provides no certainty to the States that are running CHIP. It provides no certainty to Crystal Lett to take care of Noble and manage his healthcare. It provides no certainty to anybody. The Presiding Officer's State of Alabama is already taking steps to close down their programs and freeze enrollment. I know Senator STRANGE doesn't want that to happen, but I also know Senate Republicans need to talk to their leader to make this happen.

States have to give families a heads-up so these parents have time to do what they can. Maybe some of these parents can find an alternative source of coverage, maybe they are going to fit in one more doctor's appointment before their coverage lapses. Think of that. You get this letter in the mail saying the insurance for your children is about to expire, so what do you do? You start dialing the hospital and dialing the doctor's office because you have CHIP coverage for another month or another 5 weeks or whatever, and you start scheduling any possible appointment you can, the Christmas season notwithstanding.

Providing a 3-month extension doesn't solve this problem; it just makes the situation more complicated. This body can pass massive permanent tax cuts, but they can't give families certainty? I know the tax cuts are permanent for corporations, and I know they are temporary for individual people in this country. Of course, this Congress—as special-interest controlled as it is—first takes care of corporations, but it would be nice if they gave some certainty to these children's families.

I want my colleagues to explain to the Crystal Letts in your State—because every State has thousands of concerned parents who don't know what to do with the expiration of this. My State has 209,000 children who rely on this program.

Senator HATCH said last month: We are going to get it done. Now we are hearing that Senator MCCONNELL is only going to let us vote on a 3-month extension.

This is about whose side you are on. Do we work for corporations that send our jobs overseas, or do we work for families, such as Crystal Lett and her son Noble? Do we work for families who might wake up on Christmas morning without health insurance? I guess the answer is pretty clear: Most people in this body are working for large corporations that are getting huge tax cuts and that send their jobs overseas, and they are turning their backs on those families who need us to simply do our jobs and pass this extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire.

REPUBLICAN TAX BILL

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, yesterday President Trump and congressional Republicans went to the White House to celebrate the passage of tax legislation that was partisan and that was rammed through the Senate earlier this week without one public hearing.

Debate on this bill in the Senate is over, but I think we must not lose sight of the impact this legislation will have on so many families and on our economy.

Make no mistake—this tax bill is not tax reform. Instead, it asks middle-class families and future generations to foot the bill for massive tax breaks for large corporations and the wealthy. By adding over \$1 trillion to the national debt, this tax plan will undermine our ability to address so many of the real challenges that face this country and middle-class families in America.

Indeed, Republicans have already made clear that this tax bill is just step No. 1. What we have already heard from Members of the House is that step No. 2 is going to be next year, and that includes deep cuts to Social Security, to Medicare, and to Medicaid. They are saying we are going to have to do that to address the deficits that have been made far worse by this bill.

Meanwhile, the majority's headlong rush to ram through this tax bill has meant they jeopardized access to healthcare for tens of millions of Americans.

My colleague from Ohio just talked about so many families in his State who are worried about losing their children's health insurance. We are seeing that in New Hampshire, as well, and across this country. By considering only stop-gap, short-term reauthorizations of critical healthcare programs, fear and uncertainty have been created for countless American families.

Because the Congress has failed to enact a long-term reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program, health coverage for nearly 9 million children across the United States is at risk. Congress has failed to enact a long-term reauthorization of the

community health centers, which more than 25 million Americans rely on for essential healthcare. And according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, the tax bill's repeal of the individual mandate means that nearly 13 million fewer Americans will have health coverage in the next year, and many millions more are going to pay increases in their rates.

In addition, the majority has also failed to enact a long-term reauthorization of the Special Diabetes Program. That is a devastating blow to nearly 1.25 million Americans who are living with type 1 diabetes.

All of these programs have earned strong bipartisan support. That is what is so hard to understand about this. All of these programs should have been fully reauthorized for the long term because I know my colleagues in the Senate support these programs.

Once again, we have missed a prime opportunity to address the opioid crisis. We desperately need a Federal response to the opioid epidemic that includes robust, sustained resources that match the scale of this epidemic.

Just this week, we learned from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that because of soaring overdose mortality rates, life expectancy in the United States has declined for the second year in a row. For the first time since the early 1960s, we have seen the second year of decline in life expectancy because so many people are overdosing because of substance use disorders. In 2016, 63,000 people died from overdoses. If we were losing that many people to a war in the Middle East, there would be an outcry in this country. I want to know where the outcry is, and when is this body going to act?

On Tuesday, the University of New Hampshire released a study that cited a fivefold increase over the past decade in our State of babies who were born addicted because of their parents' substance use disorders. Yet, in the face of this uncontrolled national public health emergency, the majority has once again failed to find appropriate funding.

Again, this is an issue that I know has bipartisan support. I worked with my colleagues here on the other side of the aisle to try to address this issue. Yet it has not been a priority, just as funding children's health insurance and the community health centers and other healthcare initiatives—the Special Diabetes Program—have not been a priority for funding.

This is an enormous lost opportunity. We could have written bipartisan legislation to address all of these issues, and we could have fully authorized, in a timely manner, critical health programs on which tens of millions of Americans rely. We could have addressed the opioid emergency, which is ravaging communities across this country. But instead, what did we get? We got a tax bill that makes a mockery of reform. It makes the Tax Code more complex, not less. It will grow

the deficits and our national debt. And instead of helping the middle class in reducing the complexity of our outdated Tax Code, it creates a bonanza of new loopholes for the large corporations and the wealthiest in this country.

The majority here in the Senate had no problem coming up with \$1.5 trillion in unpaid-for tax cuts for the biggest corporations in this country. In the final days before passing the tax bill, they had no problem creating a new \$700 million loophole for oil and gas partnerships that will benefit oil giants, such as Shell and Valero. They had no problem creating a new loophole for wealthy individuals with large real estate holdings—a loophole that has been described as a jackpot for the Trump family and for several Members of Congress. They had no problem retaining the carried interest loophole at a cost to the Treasury of \$20 billion. I remember during the campaign when Candidate Donald Trump railed against the carried interest loophole as a giveaway to Wall Street that was unfair to American workers. Again and again, Candidate Trump promised to kill this loophole, but President Trump now enthusiastically supports keeping it in the tax bill.

Yesterday at the White House, Republican leaders and President Trump celebrated the tax bill, while at the same time, many in the majority party insist that the Federal Government can't afford to help 9 million children who depend on the CHIP program and tens of millions of working Americans who rely on community health centers or the Affordable Care Act for access to healthcare.

Well, according to a study by the bipartisan Joint Committee on Taxation released this week, by the time many of the provisions of this tax bill expire in 2027, large corporations and the wealthiest Americans will continue to enjoy the massive permanent tax cuts because those cuts are not set to expire, but almost every income group below \$75,000 will see tax increases by 2027.

Make no mistake—this tax bill is a betrayal of middle-class Americans, and it is especially a betrayal of tens of millions of Americans who placed their faith in President Trump.

This tax bill is also a case of sadly misplaced priorities. The majority in Congress have been single-mindedly focused on passing this bill at every step, adding more and more giveaways to large corporations, instead of working across the aisle to focus on the needs of the middle class. Meanwhile, they have shortchanged the Children's Health Insurance Program, they have shortchanged community health centers, and they have shortchanged the Special Diabetes Program. They have caused hospitals and clinics across my State and across America to begin the process of reducing their services. This really demonstrates a lack of understanding and a total disregard for the

needs and priorities of so many Americans.

Yesterday, Republican leaders and the President celebrated the passage of their misguided tax bill, but Senators who care deeply about regular order and bipartisanship in this body are not celebrating. Americans concerned about our national debt and our children's future are not celebrating. Americans who see growing income inequality as a threat to our democracy—a threat made far worse by this tax bill—are not celebrating either. And parents of the 9 million children who rely on the Children's Health Insurance Program are dreading notifications from their States that their children will no longer have health insurance. These families aren't celebrating during this holiday season either.

As I said earlier, the debate on this bill is over, but I intend to continue to speak out against this very damaging tax legislation. I pledge to continue to speak out in support of the real needs of working people across America, including the need for affordable healthcare.

In the new year ahead, I certainly hope to be able to work with Senators on both sides of the aisle to address these urgent needs. The American people deserve better than this legislation. They also deserve a Senate that values bipartisanship, that values cooperation and compromise and the service of all Americans, not just the largest corporations and the wealthiest in this country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah is recognized.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to discuss the Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP.

As we all know, the authorization for CHIP expired at the end of September. Since that time, States have been utilizing their reserve funds in order to cover the healthcare needs of kids. For a number of States, those funds are due to run out in the near future.

There have been a number of claims from our friends on the other side and some of their allies in the media that Republicans have ignored the CHIP program; that we don't intend to reauthorize it; or that we supposedly placed a higher priority on tax cuts for the rich than on providing health insurance for needy children. Those claims are absolutely ridiculous, and they know it. It gets a little old sometimes—some of the stupid politics that are being played by the other side.

I come at this issue from two angles. I am both the original author of CHIP, and I currently chair the committee with jurisdiction over the program. Nobody should doubt my commitment to