

Tracie Max Sachs - The carelessness of US healthcare,

Today we embark on a long journey that will lead us into 4 years of battle over the most basic of human rights. The right to have healthcare, whether you're a female, male, transgender, disabled, mentally ill, Black, Asian, Native, queer, straight, atheist, God loving, and the list goes on and on. When it comes to human health, we are all the same. This issue is intersectional and affects us all, despite the size of our paychecks or the grandeur of our homes. We are in this together and we will all be affected sooner or later.

Today you may say, I'm not part of the ACA, so this doesn't affect me. However, tomorrow, the company you work for which provides your insurance may decide to change companies because they found a better deal. If you have a pre-existing condition, where does that leave you? You will be paying for any medication as well as medical care for that condition out of pocket. Many people's lives will be in danger when the Affordable Care Act is repealed. Perhaps you or a family member are disabled or mentally ill, what lies in the future for you? Or, like me, perhaps you are a US citizen living abroad. What if you decide to go back to the US for a year or 2 for a job, or just to stay with an elderly relative in need? How will you get insurance if you have a chronic illness yourself?

Tom Price, the choice for Health Secretary has been working for 6 years on how to repeal the ACA. He is ahead of us, he has an advantage over us. He knows the system and he is a veteran congressman that understands how Washington works. He is proposing health savings accounts. Make no mistake, this is not the same as health insurance and will not provide coverage in case of serious illness. He will be in control of a 1 trillion dollar budget and have control over setting Medicare payment policies. This will greatly influence the medical community and how doctors accept insurances. Price is also against any funding of Planned Parenthood, as well as LGBTQ rights. In addition we also have an issue with the systematic racism that is intertwined with healthcare. There are large numbers of people of color who work in the healthcare industry. Their healthcare rights are also in danger.

According to the NY times, on January 11<sup>th</sup>, senate passed what is known as a reconciliation bill, which can be used to repeal significant parts of health law and cannot be filibustered. This means that no democrats can prolong the repeal of health care law. This will endanger over 18 million people who are covered with insurance under the Affordable Care Act. The senate has rejected proposals by democrats which allow drug imports for lower rates, which continue coverage for people with Pre-existing conditions, including continued coverage for young people between the ages of 18 and 26 on their parents' policies, as well as other issues. My question is why? Why on Earth would the republicans be so forceful about standing on party lines with an issue as important as healthcare. Surely this should be a nonpartisan issue? Surely republicans have family or even themselves have health issues, mental illness, disabilities, and pre-existing conditions. Why would they not want coverage to continue for people in these categories?

The answer is money. Under the ACA, taxes on the wealthy were raised in order to fund the health care program. In an article by Jordan Weissmann in Moneybox, he alludes to the connection of a huge tax break to the ACA repeal. It would give the top 400 households a \$2.8 BILLION annual tax cut, an average of about \$7 million per household in that bracket.

The GOP thinks we don't see through their veil of false hope in which they state they will lower insurance premiums and deductibles and provide care for everyone. They currently have no plan to replace the ACA. This is an historic case of feed the rich to kill the middle class and the poor. I'm not being metaphorical, they will literally be killing people and endangering future generations with this non-policy.

No matter where in the world you live, or work, money and personal gain should never outweigh the health and welfare of the greater good. We are a global community and we must look out for each other.

How can we help, how can we move forward? We must stay vigilant, we must demand basic rights from our congress people and senators. Write to your representatives, call your representatives, become a representative. Join a grassroots organization like ours, Solidarity for Humanity. Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Thank you.