

**Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations**  
**Hearing on “Assessing the Damage Done by Obamacare”**  
**Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal**  
**Opening Statement**  
**November 6, 2025, 1:00 p.m.**

**U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT):** Let's be very clear why we are here. It is a Republican effort to destroy the Affordable Care Act. We are seeking to extend the health care tax credits past the end of the year. They make health care insurance affordable for millions of Americans who are right now going to the exchanges and trying to determine whether they could afford insurance. A commitment, an agreement, a guarantee that those tax credits will be extended, will enable reopening the government.

But that issue is not what brings us here today. It is a broader, relentless, calculated campaign to repeal the law that underlies those tax credits to destroy the ACA and take away health care insurance from millions and millions of Americans who have come to rely on it.

Fifteen years ago, Congress passed the Affordable Care Act—literally lifesaving legislation that made health care accessible for millions of Americans and guaranteed coverage for millions more who suffered from the so-called pre-existing conditions that insurance companies use as a pretext to deny coverage. It made insurance available for millions of small business people, farmers, and others who are self-employed. It made health care accessible to children who otherwise would break bones or get sick and have no accessible health care. And it lowered the cost of insurance for millions.

Ever since then, Republicans have been trying to destroy it. They sought to destroy it through more than 60 votes within a few years of its passage—and failed every time. But they came close.

I am haunted by a moment—one of the most moving and momentous moments in my time in the United States Senate, when a single vote prevented the repeal of the Affordable Care Act. It was John McCain's vote when he famously went to the well of the United States Senate as the last one of us to vote, and he gave that famous thumbs down with his still handicapped arm. That moment lives with us. And it showed the courage and strength of that great hero—a bipartisan hero.

And the Affordable Care Act ought to have bipartisan support because the people who benefit from it don't get sick according to their partisan affiliation. People who are Republicans, Democrats, Red states, Blue states, we all need health care, and we all need health care insurance.

Now, in the years since that moment, that famous moment, when John McCain preserved the Affordable Care Act, it has soared in popularity. It turns out that Americans really like having access to affordable health care. And the ACA is more popular than ever. This hearing is part of an increasingly isolated and abhorrent movement within the Republican party itself to continue the effort to repeal affordable health care.

Today, 24 million Americans have coverage through the ACA, and they are your neighbors and your friends, small businesses, farmers, families—people like Shana who are here today. And she will tell you what it has meant to her—just as others on a call I had this morning provided gripping accounts, real life stories, for how it helped to save their lives.

As a parent of four children, now a grandparent, I think often of the people who have approached me and told me they sleep better because they know that their children down the hall from them will have access to health care if they break a bone the next day in school or if they come down with some life-threatening illness or face a potentially lethal diagnosis, and they need treatment and care, and the emotional impact and physical trials are bad enough. But fortunately, they have coverage that means they are spared from financial ruin. Crushing medical debt is the number one cause of bankruptcy still in this country today.

So the ability to access health care has real-life consequences. But instead of hearing about those financial and medical and emotional impacts today, we are going to be hearing about spurious claims of fraud, no real plan to fix them. One of the real Americans who relies on the ACA from your state, Mr. Chairman, is here with us today. And I again thank her for being here. And we should let the American people know that the agenda is trying to repeal the ACA. Because you will hear me say the ACA is not perfect. Health care costs in this country are way too high, no matter what kind of coverage you have. And we should work to bring down the cost of health care, whether it is pharmaceutical drugs or hospital charges, there are many things we could do to fix those problems. But forcing Americans who rely on the ACA to pay more, especially in this economy, will not help. And the American people said loud and clear on Tuesday that affordability is front and center on their minds. The affordability of rent and food and electricity and yes, health care and health care coverage. Millions of Americans have no other options than the ACA. And they can obtain coverage only through the ACA. One of them is Sarah Colon. She lives in Clearwater, Florida. And I want to tell you a little bit about her story. We are going to play a video.

**U.S. Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI):** You are running out of time, how much longer is this going to go?

**Blumenthal:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that—

**Johnson:** Turn this off.

*[Video clip]*

**Sarah Colon:** Hi, my name is Sarah Colon. I live in Clearwater, Florida with my husband. We have a blended family of six kids. Our oldest is 24 and expecting a baby this month. The other five children live with us. Jordan, our second oldest, has muscular dystrophy and is permanently physically disabled in a wheelchair. Our other two college-age kids are in college. And our youngest are nine and 11. And these four are all on our health insurance. We have health insurance through the health care marketplace. We got it a couple of years ago when my husband was no longer eligible for health insurance through his employer due to needing to take a little bit of extra time to take care of Jordan, who's in a wheelchair and needs extra help. The marketplace was

really the only option for us. For middle-class Americans who don't have private health insurance through their employer and don't qualify for Medicare or Medicaid, there isn't another option. So, we did apply through the marketplace, and we got health insurance. It is not cheap. The only thing that makes it even remotely possible is the tax credits that we get that help defray some of the cost of the insurance.

We found out this month that our health insurance costs are going to skyrocket to about \$3700 a month, without these tax credits, and that is just completely impossible for our family to afford.

Our house flooded last year during Hurricane Helene. We had to evacuate Jordan in a canoe. We just got back in our house in March, and, you know, we just got through a tremendous amount of renovations, a huge expense, and, you know, we are not really in a position where we can move because our house set up for Jordan. We have a handicapped accessible bathroom, we have widened door ways, his wheelchair can get around, and it wouldn't be able to in another place.

Between home insurance and flood insurance and health care, we would be looking at paying about half of our income just toward insurance. And this is completely unrealistic for a middle-class American family. My husband and I are hard workers. My husband voted for President Trump. We just want to have affordable health care for our family. It is really scary to think about dropping health care when you have two young kids—the little things that happen, they get broken bones, sprains, things like that. And my husband and I want to have access to routine health care to make sure that we don't miss any health care issues as we get older in our 40's and 50's.

*[Video ends]*

**Blumenthal:** I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, if you want to cut me off—

**Johnson:** No, the Committee—I am cutting you off. I am cutting you off right now. I'm cutting you off right now.

**Blumenthal:** But you cannot muzzle a Ranking Member under these rules, and you are stopping an opening statement just because you don't want to hear the facts. I think that's really regrettable—

**Johnson:** You can continue your opening statement.

**Blumenthal:** And fortunately, my Republican colleagues, I think, are willing to listen to this story.

**Johnson:** You can continue your opening statement, but let me make a ...

**Blumenthal:** Let me just conclude by saying—

**Johnson:** You are going to conclude? That's good to hear.

**Blumenthal:** —that right now, millions of Americans are wondering what is happening in Washington, D.C. And watching this hearing, where the Chairman is trying to muzzle a Ranking Member who's simply calling attention to the facts surrounding the ACA—

**Johnson:** Totally untrue.

**Blumenthal:** —and the real-life stories of people like Sarah and Shayna Verstegen from Wisconsin indicates to me that we need to shine a light on what this effort is to repeal the ACA, and we need to stand strong in favor of affordable health insurance in the United States.

Thank you to all of the people who have come forward, contacted me, who are here today to bear witness and be advocates in favor of affordable health care for people in the United States. I have more that I'm going to say but just, let's be clear, "Assessing the damage done by Obamacare,"—the name of this hearing— gives away the game plan. Republicans are refusing to extend enhanced tax credits because they hate the ACA more than they care about the pain that this move will inflict on families. Thank you.