

Testimony of Leslie Templeton

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Good morning everyone. Thank you for having me. My name is Leslie Templeton and it is a pleasure to be here. I am a 25 year old and some of my diagnoses include epilepsy, kidney disease, ADHD, familial hypercholesterolemia, and depression. Being 25 and sick is funny. While many of my friends are worried about their careers, finding life partners, and what they are doing next week, I have the added worry about what my future holds regarding my health. I wonder if I will always be able to access my healthcare and treatments. If heaven forbid something goes wrong and I don't have access to healthcare, what will happen to me? Sitting before you, I'd be lying if I said there aren't nights I cry myself to sleep thinking about it, scared of it all; of my diseases, of my future, of losing my healthcare. With Medicare for All, these wouldn't be concerns I would have to live with everyday of my life.

I am fortunate enough to have access to the life saving healthcare I need. That is a privilege that has given me the ability to be here today. Before I was able to access treatment, I struggled to get most things done or fully participate in life. I don't know if you'll understand how deeply I mean this, but healthcare gave me the freedom to be a 25 year old. My wellbutrin, an antidepressant, has given me the ability to enjoy life. My kidney medication is slowing, if not preventing, further progression of my kidney disease and ensuring I feel well enough to live life the way I want to. And there's so much more. I am fortunate enough to be able to afford these interventions currently due to my income level, a privilege not everyone has.

Being sick is expensive, and that expense can make treatment inaccessible to so many people. Being able to access healthcare is not enough, it's being able to afford it too. As long as I always have access to healthcare and can afford it, I will be able to hopefully live a long life. I'll get married, see my kids graduate college, grow old and watch my body age gracefully. Without Medicare for All, that outcome is not guaranteed, just as it currently is not for millions of Americans. What people don't talk about enough is the cost of staying alive. My ability to live is based on whether I can afford it or not, and that thought keeps me up at night. So many people are in a similar situation to me, just look at GoFundMe. People shouldn't have to rely on charity to stay alive.

To put it bluntly: I don't want to die. I want to live a long life, without the constant worry of whether I will be able to afford my meds each month or if I'll have insurance to cover my doctor visits. Medicare for All would give every American that peace of mind, especially those of us who rely on the healthcare system the most in order to stay alive. No one should go broke because they have a life threatening illness, no mother should have to choose between getting her medication or her kids medication because of affordability, no child should have to watch their parent suffer through pain and ailments because they are not insured. We Americans are counting on you to change this reality for us, because again to put it bluntly, we don't want to die.

Thank you.