

Hello, my name is Christine Noble. , from Rochester. I am a trans woman, a sister, an aunt, a friend, an activist, a mental health patient, and a New Yorker. I am speaking as each of these today, but mostly I am speaking as a human being reaching out to others, those in need, and those with the ability to meet those needs.

Today you have heard, and will continue to hear the stories of your constituents' hardships. I have had my own, and could share in every painful detail, and it is painful. I could share the all too common story of health care delayed until it is too late because it could not be afforded. I could share missed opportunities, abuse from employers that knew they had me over a barrel so I could keep my meager benefits, or how it was impossible for me to find help until I hit bottom, someplace no one wants to be, despite the mendacious rhetoric vilifying those in need of public service. I could go at great length about any one of these, but I will not.

Instead I will share with you my bafflement. My confusion over how elected employees refuse to give their constituents what overwhelmingly they have asked for. My wonderment as a group of people who I have to assume have some level of exposure to political theory, yet miss the very simple notion, Poli Sci 101 if you will, that the first duty of state, the very basis of the social contract, is to provide security for those it serves. I submit to you that I am utterly amazed that given this, that it escapes your notice that nothing, not crime, not foreign invasion, nor any other responsibility that state takes on for itself, is as fundamental to security as our health. To quote a famous phrase, "if you don't have your health, what have you got?"

Despite all this, you can debate. You debate whether it is appropriate to leave me without the mental health care I need until I am left unable to work. You debate whether insurance companies could decide what treatments my mother needed after she was diagnosed with cancer. You debate whether it is acceptable for my cousin to not afford basic health care, and die at 37 of a heart condition that could have been caught if he had a primary care provider. You debate whether it is acceptable for a father to choose between rent and going to urgent care. You debate whether a mother has to choose between feeding her children, and keeping them current in their well visits. You debate whether or not it is moral to make a family decide between losing their home, and going bankrupt from medical bills.

You debate ethical questions so obviously, glaringly easy to answer, and come up wanting. That you cannot answer these questions makes me embarrassed for you, and those who elected you. You may say this should be handled at the Federal level, and in that, I would agree with you. That does not mean, though, that we should wait for that. We live in one of the richest states in the richest nation in the world. There is no reason we should not be able to provide better in every way for our state residents, starting with making sure everyone can have access to health care without having to worry about how they are going to pay for it. I suspect you all know what the right thing to do is, and I urge you to do it.