

**Kae Marie Kimball**  
**Kingston, NY**  
**Volunteer for Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson**

Hi, my name is Kae Marie. I am a volunteer with Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson and a resident of Kingston, NY. I've been advocating for universal healthcare since I was 17 years old. I support the New York Health Act. And today, I'm hopeful.

So you might be surprised then when I tell you my mom was a diehard Republican and I was raised Republican. My mom was the type of woman who put God, family, and country first. If you're a Republican, she would have voted for you. For sure.

My mom believed you could pull yourself up by your bootstraps. My dad and her, they did that. But then she made the decision to leave an abusive marriage, plunging us into poverty, and her into work. Just months after her divorce, my mom was diagnosed with cancer. She was a single mom working to raise three kids. And now, she had to go on chemo. She kept working, by the way, with aggressive cancer. She believed she could pull herself up by her bootstraps again, even with deck was stacked against her.

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Still, there were months early into her diagnosis where she didn't take her anti-nausea medication because the cost of that drug was the difference between putting food on the table or not. When I was in high school, there were other months I heard her on the phone with friends, before crowdfunding sites online, trying to raise enough money to pay for food and her medical bills.

The last chance medication for my mom cost around \$5,000 *a month*. That's \$60,000 a year. This drug was not covered by my mom's insurance. My mom couldn't afford to pay for it. \$60,000 is more than she made in a year. Don't tell me that bootstraps will fix that.

With liquidated savings, no opportunity for loans, and friends unable to help more than they already had, she died. I was 17.

I've told this story so many times. And sometimes people just start crying and say they are so, so sorry. Like my story is special, but it's not. It's American. And it is still happening every day.

Every day, other children lose their parents because their parents have chosen to put food on the table instead of medicine in their bodies. I won't stop fighting until they don't have to choose.

Look, I could have come here in today and talked to you about how my insurance denied me coverage for a drug I need. Or how I couldn't afford my \$1,500 a month COBRA and was without insurance for three months when I moved to New York. But I chose to talk about my mom because she changed her mind. And if you don't support the NY Health Act, I want you to change your mind, too. It's not too late.

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The last phone call my mom made to a representative about the ACA went like this. She told her Senator: I hate Barack Obama and I'm a Republican, but you need to pass this damn bill before I die.

I support the NY Health Act because I promised that I would fight until no other child experienced what I had to. That is American to me. Not bootstraps, but collectivity.

And I know now what my mom didn't know then: even if the ACA would have passed before she died, it wouldn't have saved her life. Her claim still would have been denied by her insurance. The ACA didn't go far enough. But today, we can.

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High quality, comprehensive coverage should be available to all people, not just the wealthy. It is a right, not a privilege.

Tomorrow, we wake up in a world where a mother is rationing insulin to put food on the table for her children and she could die and the state of New York is responsible for her death. Make no mistake. So I ask our state legislature: what are you going to do about it? Are you going to pass the damn bill before she dies?