

My name is Jane Field. I am a Presbyterian pastor and the Executive Director of the Maine Council of Churches, an organization of nine mainline denominations representing 550 local congregations across this great state. Our Council's mission and work are "rooted in Hebrew and Christian scriptures." Those sacred texts include many stories of healing—but nowhere can I find a story in my bible where someone's healing depended on their ability to pay for it. Nowhere in my bible does it say that the poor should suffer so the wealthy can receive tax cuts. In fact, it says just the opposite. Over and over again, the bible makes it clear: God shows a preferential option for the poor and the sick. Over and over again, scripture warns that God's measuring stick for morality is how a society treats the most vulnerable people in its midst—God measures our morality not by how well the wealthy are doing, but by how well our community cares for and protects the poor, the weak, the ill, the stranger.

If the Republican health care bill replaces the Affordable Care Act, our society **will not measure up**. And it's not just the bible that says so. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that millions would lose health care coverage or be cut from Medicaid, the program that covers the poorest and most vulnerable of our neighbors. That is why the Maine Council of Churches urges Senator Collins to vote no on this bill, to protect people here in Maine who are already struggling—those living on fixed incomes, families with children living below the poverty line, the disabled, people working two or even three minimum wage jobs just to make ends meet—these and so many more who were able to get adequate health care coverage for the first time thanks to the Affordable Care Act, or who would benefit from the desperately needed expansion to MaineCare that is available through the Medicaid program as it now stands.

Ordinarily when I speak about issues like this one, I include a story about a person from one of the congregations we represent—a story that puts a human face on an abstract public policy debate. Until today, the stories I have told were about other people—not about me. But in 2015, I moved home to Maine before I had a job offer in hand—trusting that I'd be able to find work quickly. But it took some time, and when I did find work, it was only part-time and the job didn't come with health insurance. So for more than a year, I was one of the people who benefited from the Affordable Care Act—I was able to get health insurance through the exchange and I could afford it thanks to the subsidy the ACA provided. I was healthy. I felt fine. But I hadn't had a physical in over a year. I would have postponed it even longer if I hadn't had the ACA health insurance—but **because I had that coverage** I got my physical. And because I got that physical, the doctors discovered I had cancer—a really aggressive form that, left untreated, could have killed me. But it was caught early, thank God, and after two surgeries, the oncologist tells me they think they got it all. If it weren't for the Affordable Care Act, that story would have had a very different ending.

And so would the stories of millions of other people—people who could never have afforded the basic right of health care without the insurance coverage they received thanks to the ACA. It would be immoral and contrary to the teachings of the scriptures we hold dear to repeal the ACA and replace it with the Republican bill—a bill that would make the sick even sicker, hurt the poor most of all, and do it all in order to give tax cuts to the very rich; it's a bill that falls woefully short when God's measuring stick of morality is applied.

Which is why, Senator Collins, we implore you, remember the words of Jesus, who said to the blessed, “I was sick and you took care of me—when you took care of the least of my brothers and sisters, you took care of me.” Remember his words and vote no. Thank you.