

to rid the system of discriminatory practices based on gender.

The practice of “gender-rating,” or charging more for insurance simply because of gender, is outlawed in the health reform law. This means that women can no longer be charged higher premiums.

Over a recent 3-year period, 7.3 million women 38 percent of women who tried to buy coverage on the individual market were either rejected altogether, charged a higher premium, or sold policies that excluded certain benefit coverage because of a “preexisting condition” like cancer or having been pregnant.

Now, women will be guaranteed coverage at a similar rate to men.

Already, almost 2.3 million Californian women with private insurance have access to no-cost preventive services because of the law. This includes necessary cancer screenings, such as mammograms, annual wellness exams, and contraception.

Additionally, over 1.6 million women in California who are on Medicare now have access to free preventive services because of the law.

These are just a few critical consumer protections that are now in play because of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law 2 years ago.

We have a long ways to go to improve our health care system and to ensure affordable quality care for all Americans, but these essential consumer protections take great strides to get us there.

RECOGNIZING RxIMPACT DAY

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the fourth annual RxIMPACT Day on Capitol Hill. This is a day to recognize the contribution of pharmacies to the American healthcare system. Hundreds of pharmacists, pharmacy school faculty and students, State pharmacy leaders and pharmacy company executives will visit the Capitol to share with Congress the importance of supporting legislation that protects access to neighborhood pharmacies and utilizes pharmacists to improve quality and reduce the costs of health care.

Over 260 advocates from 41 States have traveled to Washington to talk about their contributions in over 50,000 community pharmacies operating nationwide. These important health care providers are here to urge Congress to recognize the value of pharmacists and protect access to these medication experts as a part of our valued health care delivery system.

Pharmacists are some of the Nation’s most accessible and trusted health care providers. Most Americans live within 5 miles of a community retail pharmacy. They are the ultimate do-it-all providers. Pharmacists prepare, bill, and dispense prescriptions. They offer patient counseling. With their specialized education, they also play a major

role in medication therapy management, disease management, immunizations, and health care screenings.

Eighty-six percent of rural Americans reside within a 10-mile radius of a sole community pharmacy. As the face of community health care, pharmacies across the Nation offer these and other cost-saving programs and services to help patients take medicines appropriately to achieve positive results. For more than a century, pharmacies and pharmacists have supported folks in Montana and throughout America with these important patient care services. It is critical we work to support their unique contributions.

As we continue to make health care better and more affordable, we should adopt policies that recognize the health and financial benefits from helping patients adhere to their medications. This helps to improve health outcomes and reduces the risks of adverse events and unnecessary costly hospital readmissions and emergency room visits. Unfortunately, only half of Americans living with chronic diseases adhere to their drug regimens. Patient nonadherence costs the Nation’s economy an estimated \$290 billion each year, not to mention the avoidable loss of quality of life for patients and their loved ones.

Congress recognized the important role of local pharmacists when it included a medication therapy management, MTM, benefit in the Medicare Part D Program. By improving patient health outcomes, we have seen better efficiency and savings in the prescription drug program. That is why I support community pharmacies’ efforts to strengthen the MTM benefit so it is available for seniors and others struggling with chronic conditions and other illnesses.

Medicaid beneficiaries also deserve access to the most cost-effective medications. The Affordable Care Act made important changes to pharmacy reimbursement for generic drugs in the Medicaid program. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently issued a proposed rule to implement these important changes, and it will be critical for Congress to monitor this rulemaking to ensure it is consistent with congressional intent.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the vital role pharmacies play in the field of public health. All 50 States recognize the role pharmacists play by supporting their ability to administer immunizations and other important preventative services in Medicare, both Part B and Part D, and other Federal health programs.

Today, as the cochair of the Senate Community Pharmacy Caucus, I celebrate the value of pharmacists and support efforts to protect access to neighborhood and community pharmacies. I appreciate how pharmacies improve the quality and reduce the costs of health care.

In recognition of the fourth annual NACDS RxIMPACT Day on Capitol

Hill, I would like to congratulate pharmacy leaders, pharmacists, students, and executives, and the pharmacy community for their contributions to the good health of the American people.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

COLORADO VETERANS RESOURCE COALITION AND CRAWFORD HOUSE

● Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, today I wish to express my support and appreciation for the Colorado Veterans Resource Coalition, CVRC, and Crawford House, which has offered our veterans in Colorado Springs a decade of support and recovery services.

CVRC was first formed on March 9, 2000, operating in a small, three-bedroom house on Cucharrus Street with a live-in house manager and two residents. Its first dormitory was later named in honor of WWII Medal of Honor recipient and proud native son of Colorado, William J. Crawford, with his family’s permission.

On February 14, 2012, Crawford House marked its 10th anniversary, completing its first decade of successful veteran recovery services to homeless and disabled veterans in Colorado Springs. In that decade, more than 1,100 veterans successfully completed Veterans Administration programs, and 80 percent of these alumni remain successfully in the community. Many of these veterans reestablished relationships with their spouses, families, and friends; completed secondary and advanced education; and entered in to the workforce as self-sustaining citizens.

On December 1, 2003, the Colorado Veterans Resource Coalition and Crawford House added additional services, and on January 14, 2004, CVRC began purchasing two adjacent houses on Weber Street for graduating veterans to live in inexpensively while restarting their lives. These new facilities freed Crawford House beds to treat more homeless and disabled veterans. Today, both of these houses are fully paid for, which helps lower our future veteran treatment costs. It was my privilege to tour Crawford House and to meet with the staff and residents. The passion and commitment of those who work there, as well as their unending commitment to serving those who have served our Nation, is an inspiration and example to all Coloradans.

Therefore, Mr. President, I want the RECORD to show my deep appreciation and gratitude—along with that of all Coloradans—for the contributions of volunteers, organizations, and individuals who created, expanded, and continually improved the Colorado Veterans Resource Coalition and Crawford House.●

TRIBUTE TO WOODY HARRELL

● Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, on the occasion of his upcoming retirement, I