

Durbin Highlights Montgomery, Illinois Family's Health Care Story As Fourth Day Of Supreme Court Nomination Hearing Begins

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WASHINGTON – As the fourth day of the Supreme Court nomination hearing for Judge Amy Coney Barrett begins today, U.S. Senate Democratic Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, shared the health care story of Nate Lau, 8, from Montgomery, Illinois, who has relied upon protections enshrined in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to access critical health care treatments. At three months old, Nate was diagnosed with a condition known as biliary atresia that causes scarring and blockages in the bile ducts, resulting in loss of liver function, which can be fatal. He was fortunate to quickly find an organ donor and to receive the life-saving liver transplant surgery at Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago. Today marks the 8th anniversary of Nate's life-saving surgery.

Nate's medical care cost more than \$1 million within the first year of his life. Nate will have unique medical needs for the rest of his life – to stay alive and remain healthy, Nate routinely visits several medical specialists and requires multiple medications that, without his mother Jen's private insurance, would total thousands of dollars each month.

Nate is in the 3rd grade, where he enjoys soccer, video games, and playing with his younger sister. The pre-existing condition protections included in the ACA, and its elimination of lifetime limits on coverage, have been a lifeline for Nate and his family. In the event Nate's mom lost her job or insurance coverage and the ACA's protections were to be repealed, Nate could be uninsurable due to his multiple pre-existing conditions.

"In many instances, health insurance provided by the Affordable Care Act has been the difference between life and death, and the story of Nate Lau reflects that. Republican efforts to eliminate this law, including this rushed nomination of a new Supreme Court justice, would take health insurance away from families like the Laus who depend on protections for people with pre-existing conditions. What's at stake is access to quality health care and essential protections for millions of Americans in the middle of a pandemic," Durbin said.

"Nate has to maintain the health of his liver or else he will go into rejection, causing him to go back on the waitlist to hopefully receive another transplant, or cause possible death," said Jen Lau, Nate's mother. "Nate receives so much post-transplant care, losing our insurance coverage for him would jeopardize his regular appointments and everything that we have to do to monitor his health."