

A garden for others

## **The morning after the House passed its health care bill, my daughter and I planted some seeds.**

by [Melissa Florer-Bixler](#)

May 8, 2017



Thinkstock

The other day my daughter and I planted our garden. We'll never see the fruit.

In a few months, we'll move 30 miles down the road, from Durham, North Carolina, to a new home in Wake County. On Friday we woke up, the ground soft from the rain. We turned over soil, loosened the surly roots of crab grass and dandelion that crept in over the winter. We pulled out the seashell decorations and twig forts that occupied the little ones through early spring.

I wasn't sure we'd put in a garden this year. But Thursday night the House of Representatives passed its latest bill to replace the Affordable Care Act. And I knew

it was time.

I watched with a heavy heart as the votes ticked up on CNN. I thought of my friends with lupus, liver cancer, children I love who have heart conditions and Down Syndrome, the older adults in my church--all those who watched in panic at their uncertain future.

I heard congressmen, all older white men, tell reporters that preexisting conditions are the result of poor life choices. I heard others say that those impacted by the changes may have to decide if they are willing to move to a new state. *Or they will choose to die* was the unspoken alternative.

So my daughter and I picked through my bag for the seeds we'd gotten from the public library. I gingerly separated the tomatoes, extras given to me by a friend. We planted a garden for the new occupants of this house, those who would come after us. We would get nothing from this labor. It was an act of love.

I went with bush beans, knowing that the new owner might not want to put up poles. I fussed over the tomatoes, resigned myself to the possibility that they might not get staked up and would stretch out over the ground, choking out the broccoli. Maybe the new owner would not want a garden at all—maybe they would just pull everything up.

But no matter. We offered what we had. If they do keep the garden we hope they will let our neighbors share in the fruit as we have, that they'll let the little boys up the street help with the planting, that they'll give a tomato or two to Antoinette who plucks them on her way back from her job at the hotel.

I know there is more legislative wrangling ahead before the future of health care is decided. I've logged my calls to both of my senators. There will be endless amendments, and it may not get through.

But right now it's the cruelty of it all that is weighing me down, leading me out to the garden. I'm not sure what else I can do as we wait for [the Congressional Budget Office to release its report](#), for more white men to whisper in corners as they jockey to make sure 24 million Americans find health insurance unaffordable within the next ten years.

Today we can put seeds in the ground. I can show my daughter that our lives are connected to other people's lives. even those we don't know and feel no particular

connection to. She and I can leave a gift for someone else, a gift of her hands and mine. We can tell another story in the dirt, the story of the way we belong to one another, how the flourishing of another is caught up in my flourishing.