

When my son was in his mid to late 30's he started losing feeling in his left arm and hand. At first he thought it was carpal tunnel and self-diagnosed various treatments. You see, Terry was a gig economy worker. He is a talented website designer and, as an independent contractor, designed many sites you would know of. Some times he worked for companies that offered benefits. Other times he did not. He did not have access to health insurance on a regular basis. So, while he managed to keep a roof over his head and food on the table, he could not always afford the tests that had been recommended.

At around age 38 he was suffering pain and incapacity on his left side and had foot drop. He had some money so went to a chiropractor who responsibly did an x-ray and immediately referred him to a neurosurgeon for an MRI. Terry didn't have the money for an MRI. About a year later he went to work for a company with health insurance. It was his dream job. He wanted to stay with them for as long as they would have him. When he qualified for health insurance after the waiting period, Terry followed up on the MRI and found a talented neurosurgeon. A few months before his 40th birthday Terry was diagnosed with a tumor inside of his spinal column. The surgeon said he needed immediate surgery to save his life. It was cancer.

Immediately after surgery Terry was paralyzed from the neck down. Because his generous employer kept him on insurance beyond where he could have cut him off, Terry was able to get amazing rehabilitation and today is in a wheelchair and can walk with a walker sometimes. He still has problems with basic life functions and cannot do his beloved programming because his hands are in a permanent curl. He no longer has employer provided health insurance.

All of this was completely unnecessary. If healthcare was a human right and made available to everyone at a reasonable cost and NOT tied to employment, Terry would still be working and not on SSI. The surgeon said if he'd followed up sooner, he could have saved full function of his body.

I am certain there are thousands of other stories just like this one. Please do the right thing and support the Hope Amendment so another mother won't have to write to you while whipping tears from her eyes.