**Key Largo native introduces President of the United States, shares healthcare story**

By Monica Weeks

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**Washington, D.C. –** Key Largo, Florida native Monica Weeks did her hometown proud when she introduced President Barack Obama during a nationally televised speech at the White House on Tuesday, December 3. The speech kicks off a three-week publicity campaign by the White House to raise awareness about the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare. Weeks, 26, shared her personal story of how the ACA benefited her.

Weeks was diagnosed with symptoms of Crohn’s Disease, a painful and debilitating gastrointestinal disorder, at the age of 19 while she was working towards her bachelor’s degree at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida. She required several surgeries covered by health insurance from her father’s union, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 349. The symptoms returned when she was 23 and a graduate student at Florida International University in Miami, Florida, requiring frequent medical infusions which can cost $15,000 or more per treatment. Thanks to provisions in the ACA, Weeks was able to remain covered by her father’s insurance while she finished graduate school and looked for a job.

Weeks mentioned other parts of the ACA that benefit people like her during her introduction, such as provisions that prevent insurance companies from charging exorbitant premiums based on a person’s preexisting conditions and gender. She said that the healthcare law’s affordable insurance exchanges gave her a chance to pursue entrepreneurial risks: “The health exchange, for the first time in my life, gives me the flexibility to open my own small business or pursue photography as a viable career option down the road.” The ACA’s health insurance exchanges can be found at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). Weeks’ presence at the event was made possible through her involvement with MomsRising, a grassroots group that advocates for women, mothers and children.

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