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REMARKS BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT HEALTH CARE CONFERENCE
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Pennsylvania State University
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

MRS CLINTON: Thank you very much, Harris. (Applause.)
I am delighted to be here with Senator and Mrs. Wofford and Governor Casey and all the rest of you who are gathered on this campus of Pennsylvania State University.

When Senator Wofford called and asked me to come and participate in this conference, I immediately thought that it would be a good idea, because as Governor Casey has just said, in many respects the march toward facing reality and reforming our health care system in this country started right here in Pennsylvania with the election of Senator Wofford, and it has continued through the efforts of Governor Casey and the work he's doing at the state level.

But I also would have been terribly remiss not to have accepted, since I'm sure my father, who is a Penn State alum, and my brother, who is a Penn State alum, would have thought that any call by the Nittany Lion, whether about health care or anything else, had to be responded to. (Laughter.) So for both policy and familial reasons, I am delighted to be here at Penn State, Harrisburg. (Applause.)

I had a wonderful visit in South Philadelphia earlier. I visited the St. Agnes Medical Center, talked with members of the staff and patients there, and heard what I am hearing from people all over the country and what I heard again at lunch. And that is that in this richest of all countries, there is a growing sense of personal vulnerability and personal insecurity because of the way our health care system has failed us. And that no matter how we look at the problem of providing quality health care to every American, no matter what point of view we might bring to this conference about what the best way to do that might be, we know two things.

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First of all, we cannot go on the way we have been going. We do not have a system of health care in America. We have a patchwork, broken-down system. As a gentleman said to me this morning at St. Agnes -- a medical doctor -- he said, "You know, there's that old saying: If it ain't broke, don't fix it." He said, "This system is broken and desperately needs to be fixed." He said, "If I were talking about it as a patient, I would say that it is in intensive care and we're not seeing the kind of vital signs that would lead us to believe it will recover." And I think that that is a fair assessment from those who are on the front lines, either as patients or as providers.

And the second thing we know is that we are already spending more money than any nation on earth in both absolute and relative terms, but we are not doing a good job in providing the kind of health care that that money should provide. We have to face up to the costs in this system, and we have to have the courage to talk about that openly, as all of you are prepared to do this afternoon. And we have to recognize that there will need to be changes in our health care delivery and financing systems if we are going to control costs. And that controlling costs is a necessary first step in not only providing universal access to health care for all Americans, but in beginning to eliminate that sense of vulnerability and personal insecurity that affects all Americans, even those currently with insurance.

So I want to salute those of you who have put this conference together, to thank Senator Wofford and Governor Casey. And to pledge, on behalf of the President and the Vice President and all those in the Clinton-Gore administration, their absolute commitment to doing what is necessary, despite how tough it will be, to present legislation in May that will hold out the promise of a new health care system for all Americans, and then get about the business of trying to implement it so that we can see it in action sometime by the end of this year.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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