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REMARKS BY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT MARCH OF DIMES MEETING

March 4, 1993

Little Rock, Arkansas

MRS. CLINTON: (in progress) -- all of the logistics being examined for days and days until finally he had to accept the fact that he wouldn't be able to be either in Barnhill last night or here this evening.

And I want on his behalf to thank the March of Dimes, to thank the Steve Stevens and all who are part of this organization here in our state, to thank Dr. Hauss and Beverly Sills and Alan Rosenthal and all who are part of the March of Dimes on a national level; for recognizing his commitment to making it possible for all of our children to be as beautiful and energetic as Allison is, whom I had a chance to meet tonight and will be the Arkansas Ambassador for the March of Dimes.

Because in my husband's personal and political experience over the past years, he has seen what I have also seen, and that is the tragic waste of human life and potential that comes because of the problems that occur due to birth defects and also the problems that occur due to inadequate prenatal care and the problems which occur to children after they're born because of a failure of immunization or of well-child care or of some other preventable childhood disease or problem.

It is very difficult not to be committed to what the March of Dimes stands for once you have had a personal experience. But I hope that all of us who have not had a personal experience will feel similarly committed.

I started my day today by flying to New Orleans. And both of the senators and the congressmen from New Orleans and I went to a small business where the people who are working there could buy into their company insurance plan, but because of the escalating costs of insurance, the business owners couldn't afford to make it as available as they wished and the workers, by and large, could not

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afford to buy it. And I sat and talked with men and women who get up every day and go to work, people who feel very strongly that they don't want anybody's help or any kind of charity, what they want is to be able to pay their own way. And yet for many of them, since 1985, they have not been able to afford health insurance. And so they pray a lot and hope a lot that nothing happens to them or their families.

But, you know, things do happen. So I listened to the stories that have become much too commonplace. These men and women were representative of the 37 to 40 million Americans who do not have health insurance at all and who, because they work, are not eligible for government-assisted health care. They are joined by millions of other Americans who still have insurance but who are watching the costs of that insurance sometimes double or triple over the space of a year or two.

And the system that we currently have is inadequate to meet the needs of any of us because it is not meeting the needs of all of us. Because what eventually happens to the men and women I spoke with, as they told me, is that having to forego regular primary and preventive health care, eventually they are forced to make decisions.

One kind of decision was represented by the woman who told me that she did try to get an annual exam because she wanted to keep healthy -- paid for it out of her own pocket -- and last year was told that after taking a mammogram, it was clear that she had a mass in her chest, and she was referred to a surgeon. And the surgeon after looking at the mammogram said to her, you know, I should do a biopsy, but because you don't have insurance, I'm just going to watch this for awhile.

And I took that very personally because as many of you know, Bill's mother is a breast cancer survivor, and I would hate to have thought that when she went to her surgeon, her surgeon had said, let's watch it for awhile; instead of saying, as he did, let's check you into the hospital. Or as the result of being in this situation might be, as another gentleman told me, when he finally got very sick and couldn't self-medicate himself anymore, he went to the emergency room because he didn't have a doctor. And in the emergency room he stayed for four hours and came out with a bill of \$1,000, which is one-seventeenth of his annual income and possible for him to pay except maybe with small payments over many years. And he doesn't know what he's going to do, but you and I will pay for that in our health insurance and in the costs that will be shifted to us because he's unable to pay for it himself. Or perhaps we will once again see the result that a doctor from the charity hospital, where Virginia

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Kelly trained years ago told me, where 50 percent of the women who give birth there now have had no prenatal care.

All of these stories are not just statistics in some dry report, they are the stuff of which people are living and coping with on a daily basis. If my husband does anything in this first year of his presidency, he hopes it will be to take the very human problems posed by our inadequate health care system and combining them with the very difficult problems caused by our economic situation, come up with a comprehensive solution because they are inextricably linked to each other. (Applause.) We will never solve our budget problems; we'll never deal adequately with the deficit until we deal with the health care crisis and the escalating costs that are in danger of breaking the system that we have left.

And so when Bill made his decision to pursue both of these, he was acting out of a deep conviction that as a country we had to face up to our problems. And maybe it's because he's from Arkansas, and maybe because he'd been a governor, he couldn't understand why that had not been done before. But it finally is being done now.

And what I want to say to all of you tonight is that when Franklin Roosevelt started the March of Dimes, he may have done so out of a personal experience, but he also did it because he understood what it meant to invest in people for the future. He understood that it was not just the right and human thing to do, but that finding a cure for polio would save our country money as well as lives.

And what the March of Dimes has done is very clearly challenge all of us to keep investing in our children, investing in our future, solving the problems that are there to be solved by putting our heads together, facing reality, and getting on with the work of making a better future for all of us.

And I am so grateful to so many of you in this room for all that you have done over the years to make it possible for all of us together to make progress. And I am so hopeful that we will take the lessons that have been learned from our state and apply them in our country, and that with all of us working together in the next few years, we will be able to say we have made a difference and we have made life better for America; and we've made Americans' future more secure.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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