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McGovern Chulacane Event

For Immediate Release

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR MCGOVERN CHILD CARE EVENT
ATTLEBORO, MASS
JUNE 4, 1998**

Thank you very much. Thank you Mayor for welcoming me to this beautiful city. Thank you Superintendent for letting me see one of the wonderful schools in this district. I want to thank everyone who is part of the school system, especially those who are on its board, and have sheperded it to this position. I want to thank everyone connected with Project Connect, particularly its director, Lynn, who guided me around some of the projects that I was not able to see earlier with the Congressman. I want to thank Yolanda, for her personal testimony and now for her leadership as a teacher. I also want to thank the principal and teachers of the Hyman Fine Elementary School, and I want to thank the students whom I was able to meet earlier in the gymnasium, and I wish all of you could have seen them because they certainly were a picture perfect advertisement for public education and for the mission of this school district, which as I heard the Superintendent describe it, is preparing citizens for a democratic society. It is the most important function of public education and I want to congratulate and salute the citizens of Attleboro for making it the mission of your school district. (Applause)

I also want to thank members of the State government, the Attleboro City Council, the Department of Education, the State Senators and Representatives who were introduced, and if I'm not mistaken I believe that the Mayors of Worcester and Fall River might be here as well so I want to welcome them to this gathering.

I was also, I have to confess, quite taken by Jim's description of his commitment to family issues, because I can testify that he has cared about family issues for years. When I first campaigned for him, when he was running for Congress, he was very adamant about how, as a democracy, as a wonderful nation with our history of great accomplishment moving into the next century, we had to focus on the most important citizens in our country, our young people, and we had to support parents and families so they could do a better job. But I just noticed a tinge more of passion in his voice every since I said hello to him when I got out off the car. And I think that Lisa and Patrick have a lot to do with that. I know that in talking with Jim or any new parent I find myself saying to them what I heard probably a thousand times when Chelsea was 45 days old or give or take a few months and people would say, "Oh it goes by so fast". And I would think "Oh, yeah right, not fast enough. When can I get back to sleep?" Now, of course, I wish I could take back all of those words, and I could hear myself, almost against my will, when Jim was showing me the pictures that he offered all of you downstairs. I could hear myself saying, "Oh Jim it goes by so fast, you know, turn around and he's going to be going out the door to college, or to work, or some other great adventure. So enjoy every minute."

I don't think I needed to tell Jim and Lisa that because they clearly have a commitment to

their son. Jim has taken that commitment that all parents should feel and has translated it into a real commitment to an agenda in Congress that would help every parent, and every citizen understand how important this work of raising the next generation is. Now we all know that, and we've taken it for granted. Most of the people, if not everyone of us in this room have worried over and been as diligent as we knew how to be, and have worked as hard as we could in raising our own children, and in being good parents, good grandparents, aunts and uncles. But clearly we have to take that personal message and commitment and take it outside of our own homes because what happens in the schools and streets of our country with other children, effects our children.

You know when I wrote "It Takes A Village", there were some who criticized me and said- "Well, what is she talking about? It takes parents!"- Well of course it takes parents; I write about that in the book. Anyone who reads it knows that I start with my own parents, and my grandparents and how grateful I am that I had a strong family, one that instilled love and discipline and strong values and a sense of direction and purpose. I will be forever grateful to my family.

But my parents also understood that other forces and people would have an impact on the lives of my brothers and me. That's why when my father got out of the service at the end of World War II and looked around for a place to raise the family that he and my mother were starting, they moved to a suburb, where they would pay higher taxes for better schools, where they would pay higher taxes for recreation facilities. So that the children that they were having and all of the children in our neighborhood would be given a sense of belonging, and something to do during the day, and adults to be their role models in the school and in the playground and throughout our lives.

My parents understood, as the people of Attleboro understand, that it is a community venture. Certainly the primary responsibility and by far the greatest influence on any child is that child's family. And any parent that doesn't recognize that and do all that he or she can do to fulfill those obligations is letting that child down and turning his or her back on the most sacred responsibility any of us have.

But at the same time we can't do it alone. My daughter will eat food that is examined by people I'll never meet, and I just hope to goodness they've done a good job. My daughter will drink water that is the responsibility of people who test it and put it into our water systems, and I trust that they're on the job. My daughter will go places and be places where police protection and fire protection are critical to her safety. And I trust that all the adults with that responsibility will be there on the job. My daughter will live in a community in years to come that will have to rely on the entrepreneurial spirit of the business leaders to create jobs and provide economic opportunity, and we want to be sure they're ready for the challenges of the future.

Just looking around any city, whether it's Attleboro, or Fall River, or Worcester or Boston, we know that it takes a community that is connected, a community that cares about its

citizens, a community that, not to sound corny, tries to live by the golden rule. A community that tries to say, you know what we need to do to make it possible for everybody to be successful because the more others are successful, the more likely I and my children will be successful as well.

So what you are doing here is extremely important. And as Jim said, I'm here because I'm trying to highlight around the country success stories like Project Connect, and the partnership you have with the Attleboro school district, private child care centers and the private and not-for-profit sectors in this community. Because what you're doing is sending a message loudly and clearly, that we know what works.

Now, we also are realists. You know, we weren't born yesterday. We know that no matter how hard a family tries, no matter how hard a neighborhood tries, they are going to be problems with some kids no matter what. That's life. We can go back and read the Bible and know that. But what we have to do is minimize the problems. We have to create conditions, in which there are fewer and fewer kids, who, for whatever reasons, go the wrong way, get into trouble, cause difficulty, take up violence to act out their problems against society. We're trying to minimize that. Now we're very fortunate that in the last five years we've had a steadily decreasing crime rate in America. I am grateful for that, and I give a lot of credit to the changed strategy that my husband and people like Congressman McGovern adopted. It made a difference that we put more police on the streets, that we took assault weapons off the streets, that we had the Brady Bill that prevents people who shouldn't have guns from getting guns, and that we had community policing so that we could create a situation in which we diverted more kids from crime, where we had more adults who were interacting with kids. And it starts, as you heard the Congressman say, it starts with a commitment to parent education, to supporting parents, to helping people like Yolanda make the right decisions by giving her the support that she needs, and by having a whole community stand behind the mothers and fathers who are raising our children.

Now Jim McGovern understands that, which is why he's been a staunch supporter of the President's child care initiative. He has introduced a piece of legislation called "The Early Learning and Opportunity Act" -- which in many way has modeled on what's happening right here in Project Connect.

He's also been a champion for expanding Head Start -- which we know makes a difference in the lives of many families and children. We've seen some real increases in the number of young children who can be enrolled in Head Start and Jim has done invaluable work in making that happen, and I want to publicly thank him here in Attleboro.

I think what Jim's larger message is, and what the message of Project Connect is, is that we have a system that you've put together here that can be and should be replicated throughout Massachusetts and throughout the country.

In fact, there are model programs like this scattered throughout the country. Just last week I with one of Jim's colleagues, Congresswoman Tauscher, in the Walnut Creek Valley area outside of San Francisco, where a school district in connection with a non-profit foundation was putting together after school programs. I have seen programs that work, literally from one coast of our country to the other. So, I know that we understand what needs to be done. But we still have some convincing to do with some people who honestly believe that the community has no stake in helping families, that it truly is every family for itself, and that only parents can be and should be responsible and that if you can't make it on your own, there's something wrong with you. I think that's a very unrealistic assessment of what's happening in our country and in this world today.

You know it used to be that we had informal networks of people supporting each other, family member in large extended family settings and neighbors all there kind of providing their own Project Connect. But it was also in many respects a simpler time. There were lots of jobs available, as any of us could attest, for hard working people who didn't need a whole lot of education.

I was in Chicago yesterday, where I was born, and I was thinking of all the factories that used to be in that city, and there were jobs there for new immigrants and for people from the South who came up to find their fortune. All they had to do was to show up on time, and put in a very long, hard days work, and they could make a good living for themselves and their families.

There aren't many of those jobs left anymore, are there? The jobs that the new economy demands and you know so well here in Massachusetts because you've been going through this transition, successfully. But it's been a hard one; places in this Congressional district that used to have great mills that employed hundreds and thousands of people, some of your parents and grandparents, and great-grandparents are no longer operating, we know that. There are new jobs, that have new demands, and people have to be more involved with teamwork and collaboration in the new workplace.

Now, all of that may sound like it's kind of economic and abstract but it's directly related to what you're doing here, and I want to congratulate you because when I saw those young children in Project Connect, I knew that you were helping to shape those future citizens of a democracy, those future workers in a new economy, those future parents of the children of the 21st century. There isn't any more important job.

That's why what the President has proposed on two fronts is so important. You heard Jim talk about the President's proposal in child care. You know I have found in the last several years that lots of times, when Americans hear the President propose something as they heard him in the State of the Union, talk about what he wanted to do to support early childhood development and after school care, and parent education, the kinds of things you're doing, that sometimes Americans think--well the President has said it, that means it's going to happen--. When I was in California last week, there was a distinguished panel, the school Superintendent,

and some teachers, and a principal, and some community activists. And one of the School officials said, "You know we can't wait to get our share of the 20 billion dollars the President proposed." I said, well there's a little hitch before you get that, its called the Congress. You have to convince a majority in the Congress to pass this proposal. And this person was quite surprised because I think he thought that , well you know the President said that we were going to get this money, we could expand this program in after school care and of course you have to convince your elected representatives to do just that. I hope its something that this community will pay some attention to. You already have very strong support in your Congressional delegation. So write to your friends and neighbors outside of Massachusetts and see if you can persuade some of them to persuade their elected representatives.

The President also proposed some significant changes in education. The President wants, just as he argued for a 100,000 new police of the street to fight crime, he wants a 100,000 new teachers in the classroom to lower class size. So that we get more teacher/student interaction. (Applause)

Any of you who are associated with Project Connect, or any of you who are teachers or have been teachers in the last 10 to 15 years know how significant it is to get more time with individual students. Especially now because so many students bring so many needs to school. And its not just poor kids who bring those needs because of the breakup of families, or because of what kids see on television,. Kids from all classes and walks of life, and every race and background are coming with all kinds of things going on in their little lives at home that require more adult help and support. And its impossible to do if you've got so many kids you can barely get around to them once a day. So we do need lower class size.

I know it might be hard for you in Attleboro, in this beautiful school to imagine, but I've been in school buildings in our country where literally the ceiling is falling down, where the windows are broken and taped, where the toilets don't work, where there are whole sections of the school that are just blocked off, where the environment is unsafe, unhygienic for both students and teachers. And I think to myself, how on earth can we say with a straight face to a child, you're the most important person to us. Now come into this school, but be careful you don't fall down the stairways which aren't guarded, be careful that the plaster doesn't fall on your head, but you're really important to us.

Most kids that I've been around are a lot smarter than that. And those children I saw in Project Connect would figure that out in a minute. They were getting what we call a double message, aren't they.

So we do need to do something to repair a lot of our older school buildings. In rapidly growing districts, we need to help provide more school buildings because there are too many kids who have now gone their entire elementary and high school years in trailers in a lot of our fast growing districts. And that too is not a sign that we take the importance of education very seriously.

Now, I just want to add that my belief about the importance of early childhood, which you share, is one that I think is getting greater and greater currency because of scientific research. I remember about 18 or so years ago, being with my husband and Chelsea was a baby and we were campaigning because you know that my husband has run for office a lot of times. In Arkansas he had to run every 2 years, sometimes a primary, a run-off election, and a general election. I've told him that I think he has run for office more than any person in the history of the world. We would be out meeting people and talking to them and I remember going up to a group of women holding infants in their arms and hanging on to their toddlers and I was just making conversation, and I said I bet your having the best time with those babies and I bet your really having a good time talking to them because I, of course, talked and sang to Chelsea because that what my mother had done for me and told me to do. And I remember the blank looks on these women's faces; one woman said to me, why would I talk to her, she can't talk back? Well there were a lot of people who hadn't been talked to, or read to, that's not the way they were raised, and they just honestly didn't know that that was something that would make any difference in a child's life.

Well now we know that it literally creates brain cell connections. That as you're holding that baby, you're stroking that baby, you're talking to that baby-- just as Lisa has been doing with Patrick--you are actually growing that child's brain.

We didn't know that, but now we do. So now, even those who were not interested in little babies before, or didn't think it made that much difference. I can remember years ago a young man I went to school with was expecting his first baby and, unlike Jim, he wasn't really tuned into this. And I said, well I bet you're going to have a great time with that baby. He said I'm going to wait until he can throw a ball and then I'll get to know him.

Well those days are over. We know that both mothers and fathers have a lot to do in creating what happens with that baby. And business leaders, and political leaders have a real stake in making sure parents get the best possible support they can get to be good parents. So, I hope that the work you are doing here in Project Connect will continue to flourish and affect the lives of children and families here in Attleboro. But I also hope that what you are doing will spread wide and far and that maybe because of this visit some people will come and visit with Lynn or Yolanda or some of the other members of Project Connect or the school district and say, tell us about this, and you'll be able to give them a hand. And then I do hope that the President's child care bill will pass so that there will be some funding that will serve as incentives for schools and communities to do what you have done.

But I think the most important ingredient in your success, and I saw it as I sat up here and listened to the speakers, are the people who are in this audience. I felt like I was at a pep rally for early childhood learning and education (Laughter/Applause). I could tell from your pride and your applause and your standing ovations, of the accomplishments of the people that were up here before me. You do have the kind of commitment to this city and its children that I want to

see throughout America.

You know I've done a lot of traveling in the last couple of years. It has been a great, great privilege. I've gone with my husband; I've gone on my own representing our country. And everywhere I go, whether its the former Soviet Union into those new democracies or Africa, or South America, I wish I could take every American with me. I would like for you to see and hear how we are viewed. How people think about us. How grateful they are that we've represented fundamental values--that started right here in Massachusetts--of freedom and opportunity. And they're constantly saying to me, America is so important, America has to continue to lead. And I think to myself, we have so many blessings in this country. And particularly now with this good economy that we have been blessed with for a number of years. What are we going to do with these blessings?

You know we are not very far off now from a new century and a new millennium. When that new century and new millennium come, it will be a time for most of us to at least give a passing thought to how extraordinary it is to live at this moment in time. To think of how different our world is than it was 1000 years ago. And how different our country was just 100 years ago. And the President has asked us to think about the gifts we can give to the future. How will we mark the millennium? Well some people will do very grand things. Yesterday in Chicago a major American corporation called Sara Lee, gave 100 million dollars worth of art to art museums all over our country. A very grand and important gesture. But I think equally important to the future of our country is what you are doing here, because you are giving a gift to the future by investing in the children and families of Attleboro. And in years to come, the health and success of this community will be enhanced because of what you did. I believe people will look back and say thank you to the far sighted citizens of this community for understanding what really matters. Thank you very much.