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Long-Term Care Event  
The White House  
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FIRST LADY HILLARY CLINTON,  
PATRICIA DARLAK, A FAMILY CAREGIVER,  
AT EVENT ANNOUNCING BENEFITS FOR LONG-TERM CARE  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON, DC

BODY:

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THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. -----

MRS. CLINTON: (Applause.) Good morning, everyone. It's a great pleasure to join  
with the president in welcoming all of you to the White House. And first, I  
want to wish everyone a happy new year.

In fact, I find it very fitting that our first official White House event in  
1999 is an issue that affects so many Americans. We've come together to talk  
about an issue that you'll find in every family and in every community, and  
that's the challenge of providing quality long-term care for our parents,  
grandparents and other family members with disabilities.

I'm particularly pleased that we could be joined by so many members of Congress.  
And I want to thank Senators Breaux and Dodd, (Reed/Reid ?) and Specter and  
Wyden for joining us, and Senator Feinstein will be joining us shortly by  
satellite. In addition, I want to thank Representatives Brown, Cardin,  
Cummings, Hoyer and Moran for joining us as well.

We're also pleased that Treasury Secretary Rubin and HHS Secretary Shalala and  
the director of the Office of Personnel, Janice Lachance, are here as well for  
these important announcements. The vice president and Mrs. Gore will be joining  
us by satellite from an adult day care center in Sacramento, California. Later  
they will talk to us about the people they have met who could benefit from some  
help in caring for their disabled and chronically ill family members.

You know, every family has its own story about how difficult it is to see those  
we love grow infirm or become disabled, and the challenges we face in giving  
them the care, the love, the attention and the medical services they need and  
deserve. I know how hard this is from my own family, and I know that millions

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of Americans are voluntarily providing unpaid, informal long-term care to family members or friends today. In fact, almost 40 percent of all informal caregiving to aging Americans is provided by their children, predominantly by their daughters. And today, more and more working families are caught in the middle between nurturing their growing children and nursing their aging parents.

We've come to call this the "sandwiched" life, but that doesn't even come close to describing the small, daily acts of love and frustration, triumph and worry, hope and exhaustion that so many are familiar with as they struggle to meet the many different needs of their loved ones. I'm very proud of all that we have done in this administration, under the president's leadership, to help Americans' parents meet the family responsibilities that they face as well as their responsibilities at work.

But we still have some work to do. We have to provide greater support for quality affordable child care; we have to expand after-school programs; we have to provide better home- and community-based long-term care for the elderly; and the president's agenda, with the support of Congress, is helping millions and millions of American families to meet these important obligations.

Everyone knows that there isn't any substitute for families being able to care for their loved ones, but we sometimes forget that the caregivers also need care. They, too, carry enormous burdens. So what is being proposed today is truly a multi-generational proposal. These initiatives will build on the president's deep commitment to the well-being of older Americans and Americans with disabilities, which include efforts to promote higher quality nursing homes, a far stronger Medicare program, and making Medicaid more flexible.

It is now my pleasure to introduce one of those Americans who knows first hand what we're talking about this morning. Patricia Darlak and her husband, Dennis, who are here with us, they understand the challenges of why this proposal is so timely and essential.

Patricia knows how difficult it is to try to be a good mother to her children, a good teacher to her students, a loving and responsible daughter to her own ailing mother. And so today, these initiatives are designed to support people like Patricia. She is literally standing in for millions of other Americans who are providing care to aging loved ones or those with disabilities, often in the midst of an already-demanding life.

So please join me in welcoming Patricia Darlak. (Applause.)

MS. DARLAK: Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, and guests. It is my pleasure to be here today to have an opportunity to share my family with you and to solicit your help. I am a professional, a wife, a mother, a daughter. Each is a full time job, but lately I have been overwhelmed because I am also a caregiver. My teacher in life, my mother, needs my help.

She needs me to look after her, to actually see her eat, drink, swallow medication, dress and bathe. She is not incapable of doing these things, she just forgets to do these things for herself. She needs me to make her aware of the time of day, the day of the week, the month of the year and the season. It is not because she is physically unable to do these things, although she has other medical problems, she has dementia, and it is this condition, not her age alone, that causes her to forget that she has not eaten or drank anything.

I am a special education teacher in an elementary school. My lunch period and planning period is spent dashing home to watch mom eat and drink -- eat the meal that I have prepared for her before I have gone to school, and watch her take her prescribed medication. While this arrangement has worked until now, it may not work much longer. This puts physical and emotional stress on me and my family.

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I have tried to employ someone for an hour or two midday, but professional caretakers want eight-hour days and 40-hour weeks so they can meet the needs of families. I have sought help from other sources only to be referred from one to the other. Help has been slow in coming. There is no one place I could go for information and help.

This is not my first experience seeking help or answers for assistance and care for family members. In 1990, my father had a stroke after surgery and had diminishing mental and physical handicapping conditions. My father could not recognize me or his only grandchildren. My mother cared for him as best she could until he passed away in 1995. Because he did not require skilled medical care, there was no help readily available for my mother, and her health was failing. In September, my husband and I decided that mother had to come to live with us. There was no other option, because we could not continue the 10-hour round-trip drive to check on her and make sure she had food in the house. Even though we arranged daily meal delivery for her, there was no way to ensure that she was actually eating it.

During this past holiday season, my mother recognized my children when they came home from college, but had difficulty perceiving that they were 20- and 21-year-old adults. In her mind, they were locked in as seven- and eight-year-olds. These two collegians had a lot of love for their grandmother and a good sense of humor, much compassion, and were able to enjoy the holidays with her, even as their names were confused with some beloved household pet's. Grandma sometimes has difficulty putting the right face with the right name. My distinguished friends, let us remember, while we are still able, that as our parents and our family members looked after our every need when you were an infant and a child, we may have to care for them in much the same way. This care is not inexpensive. Medicare and most supplemental insurance do not cover long term care. Medicare does not cover prescription medications. It is a financial strain. I may have to delay retirement in order to pay for care for my mother.

Mr. President, my story is not unique. There are millions of other families facing problems like mine. Care-giving can be rewarding. But your proposal of direct financial assistance is needed. And supportive services are necessary for us to carry on for our loved ones. Every American would benefit from the proposals being made today.

It is my honor at this time to introduce the President of the United States, William Jefferson Clinton. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT CLINTON: Thank you very much. Thank you. (Continued applause.) Thank you.

Thank you, Patricia, for your fine statement and for the power of your example. We appreciate you and your husband being here today and the work that you're doing.

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