

Child Care and Crime Prevention

Event

The White House

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SENATOR CHRISTOPHER
DODD (D-CT), DR. T. BERRY BRAZELTON, AND OTHERS AT A WHITE HOUSE
EVENT

TOPIC: CHILD CARE AND CRIME PREVENTION

LOCATION: THE ROOSEVELT ROOM OF THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON,
D.C.

BODY:

MRS. CLINTON: (In progress due to technical difficulties) -- crime, Invest in Kids, an anti-crime group made up of 700 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, experts, and victims of violence.

Now this report which we are releasing has the expert help and advice of so many people who are on the front lines of caring for our children and of preventing crime. It tells us that at-risk children who receive quality child care today are much less likely to commit crimes tomorrow. They're less likely to enter school with serious behavioral problems. They are less likely to be arrested. They are less likely to break the law again and again when they grow up to be adults.

And by investing in child care, we save not only precious lives and futures, but also precious resources. For every dollar we invest in child care, we save more than \$5 in crime costs down the line.

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It is my great hope that Congress will pass this budget so that we can take a step forward to having the kind of country that all of us want to have and that

our children deserve to have. As today's report confirms, investing in child care is not only the right thing to do, it is the smart, economic and, now we know, crime-fighting thing to do as well.

Now, our next speaker is someone who has been working on this issue for a lot longer than anyone else in this room. He has worked tirelessly on behalf of our youngest and most vulnerable children, and it has been my great pleasure to work with him over many years now. So let me introduce a professor, a pediatrician, a co-author of today's study, a great champion of children, a friend and a mentor to so many of us, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton. (Applause.)

DR. BRAZELTON: Well, Hillary, it's a great pleasure to be here with you again in the White House. Hillary has done more for children and families than any president's wife that I know of, and it's just incredible to me. I hate to lose her. And we've worked together, as she says, over 15 years. They told me to say 30, and I said, No, that was too much -- (laughter) -- so I cut it down to 15.

But I am proud of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, because it's been the brain child of people that really have power -- the adults who cope with the other end of failures, police chiefs, district attorneys, sheriffs and victims -- and it's time we looked at what we were doing instead of putting band-aids on the other end, such as prisons and so forth. And I think these people realize that we have been a failure in what we've been doing.

And I -- the rigorous research that I can quote now is certainly a back-up to all that we're talking about. Researchers at the High/Scope Foundation randomly chose half a group of at-risk toddlers to receive a quality -- and that's the biggest word, quality -- educational child care program while they were three and four. Twenty-two years later, the children left out of the program were five times as likely to have grown up to be chronic lawbreakers with five or more arrests.

Think of the cost of that.

Brand-new research has just come out from a large 14-year study of children enrolled in government-funded child-parent centers at ages 3 and 4, and shows that compared to children who'd been left out of the program, they were only half as likely to have two or more arrests as teens.

And in North Carolina, which is a leading state now -- we're beginning to see the states turn into paying attention to this -- the children who have been in child care centers, bolstered by wonderful Governor Hunt, the state's pioneering Smart Start program, were half as likely to have behavioral problems with they hit kindergarten.

So we have every kind of evidence that this works, and it works to prevent.

The thing that strikes me about it, too, is what Hillary mentioned -- that we're not just talking about children, we're talking about families. When a family knows their child's going to be taken care of appropriately, they don't have to grieve in the same way. When they have to leave a child with somebody you or I wouldn't trust, nor would they, what recourse have they got but to begin to grieve and to begin to pull away from that child and not -- and to deny what might happen to that child? So we end up with seeing the empty faces that we saw in the Colorado episode. When you look at those children on TV, they are empty. They don't have what we want all of our kids to have.

The three things that I think -- four things that I think we can give a child in the first three years at the cheapest price are:

Self-esteem. Every time somebody looks at that child and the child goes, "Ooh," and they go, "Ooh," back -- (laughter) -- that child feels, "I matter! And every time that child smiles and somebody smiles back at him, that child gets a sense of self-esteem.

And then, with enough self-esteem, they can care about others. This is what we've lost in this country -- caring about others.

The third thing is the motivation for learning. You know, we hear all this about stimulating your child in the uterus, stimulating him and so forth. Kids who feel good about themselves are ready to learn anything we want them to.

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I think if we can fund it at the national level, at the state level, at an individual level, we can do it; we can give every child in this country quality. And the Perry Preschool Project showed that if we do this early, we can save \$7 on every child later on. And then you ask, what will it cost us? Compared to what?

Now I'd like to introduce Chris Dodd, one of my favorite people. He's been -- (laughing) -- we've been fighting together for 50 years (laughter) -- on almost everything: 99, 457, the Early Intervention Program, the Parental Leave Bill, the Child Care Bills. Every bill that's come up for children, Chris is the leading expert on. So I think all of us deserve to give him a hand. (Applause.)

SEN. DODD: Thank you very much, Doctor. If I had any sense, I'd just sit down right now after that! (Laughter.)

If I start doing this on television, Doctor, I don't get the same response you do -- (laughter) -- (inaudible) -- children. Every time you do it, it moves an audience, and we thank you immensely.

Well, this is about as good a child care setting as there is in the country. As long as Hillary Rodham Clinton is in this house, children don't have a better place and a better set of advocates than they do in the president and the first lady. We thank you immensely. What they've done over the years. It deserves a round of applause. (Applause.)

And not just a newcomer, obviously, to it, but for those of us who have had the pleasure of working with Mrs. Clinton over the years, the Children's Defense Fund, as the first lady of Arkansas, and during these past more than seven years now as first lady of the United States. I've often said I have a great friend in the president of the United States when it comes to these issues, but if I know I really want to get something done on children, I know who to call here, with all the other things the president has to worry about and talk about.

And, Dr. Brazelton, it's always a pleasure to be with you, in your company. And when we need to make a case to our colleagues in Congress, there's no better advocate for children anywhere in America than Barry Brazelton. And we thank you immensely for the years and years of advocacy on behalf of America's children.

My colleague, Ben Cardin, Eric Holder, Chief Sullivan. Pleased to be with you. Olivia, we thank you as well for all the tremendous 00

How do you close your eyes to the fact that our child care providers, the individuals who work and nurture these young people for eight to 10 hours a day, are paid abysmally in this country. Some of the lowest-paid workers in the nation are people that we ask to watch the next generation of Americans. We do a better job in insisting that your pets are cared for in this country than that your children are. And there ought to be a sense of outrage about that across this country.

As a result of the efforts of the Clintons and others in Congress, we've been able to improve the safety of the food that children eat, recently with the medicines that children take, with the toys that they play with we've done a much better job. It seems somewhat ironic, to put it mildly, that we have yet been able to increase the quality of the settings where these children live every day as a result of the pressures that their parents are under.

And it is a frightening experience for parents to have to worry about where your child is going to be, who is watching out for them, not losing my job because I have to worry about whether or not the child care setting is appropriate and proper. I don't know if enough of my colleagues, frankly, understand the fright and the terror that parents go through every day, with 13 million children every single day in a child-care setting, with so many who have to struggle every single week to try and find a good, safe place for their children. In this day and age, as we enter the 21st century, this ought not to

be a partisan issue. Democrats and Republicans ought to be able to find common ground on seeing to it that we have accessible, affordable and quality child care for every needy child in this country, and that's what we're determined to achieve.

So I'm pleased to be joining today with the folks who prepared this report. Arlen Specter, our friend and colleague in the Congress, has committed to raising up to \$2 billion, Ben, the numbers that we're talking about here, the administration has those numbers in there, Berry, and we're hopeful this year. Last year, four times the United States Senate passed legislation to increase the funding for child care. On four different occasions we were able to achieve that. And yet in the arcane world of the Congress, the conferences where the two houses meet, we lost out on these issues. Well, we're determined not to lose this year. That's why we're here today. That's why we've come together to make the case once more that in this year, the first year of the 21st century, the American children and their child care needs are not going to be forgotten.

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We in law enforcement fully recognize that we need to be strong on crime, and we need to have safe communities. But we know we're not going to achieve real safe communities until we are starting to invest more money in the early childhood years of the children we're dealing with. Head Start needs more money. Other programs similar to Head Start in our communities across the country need to be better funded. Those proposals are before the Congress, and they need to be funded -- not only in the Congress, but also in our state legislatures.

As Dr. Brazelton said, for -- every dollar invested in early childhood care saves \$7 later in the way of criminal justice system costs, social services costs, and puts a more viable person enjoying the full life of -- American society has to offer.

I work with about 80 kids who have been passed out or dropped out of high schools. They were placed in alternative schools. They have failed and were tossed out of the alternative schools. Those kids are well on their way to jail, to become my clients and the prison system clients in jail. In working with them, a board that I serve on in working with those kids, we find that many of them have literacy problems. They don't have educational deficits as far as ADD or dyslexic, but they just never had the opportunity to really grasp the basics -- reading, for one. They never stood a chance of getting started in the elementary schools, and they start failing out in junior high and high school. We need to invest our money far better in that preschool, Head Start, early childhood development, so that they can be successful when they hit our regular public schools.

The public of America understands the public mandate to fund schools starting

at first grade. They don't understand -- and we need to help get that message across -- we need to make better investments in preschool, early childhood development, so that these children stand a chance and don't become the clients of myself and the attorney general's office, Mr. Holder.

So Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' partnership of chiefs, commissioners, sheriffs, prosecutors back the administration's proposal for increased investments and also, then, encourage our state legislatures to look at their role, their responsibility at the state level to invest as well, to match with the federal government's investment in early childhood education and development.

With that, I'd like to introduce a man who is a major leader in the House in early childhood care legislation, Mr. Ben Cardin from Maryland. (Applause.)

REP. BEN CARDIN (D-MD): Thank you. Sheriff Sullivan, thank you very much for what you do for our children and what you do for our community. And I first want to thank the children who are with us today. Thank you very much.

YOUNG PEOPLE: Yeah! (Applause.)

REP. CARDIN: Chris Dodd, of course, has been the real champion in the United States Senate on the child issues in so many different ways, and I want to agree with Chris Dodd that for the past seven years, America's children and families have had the benefit of the most effective, most persistent, most determined voice for child care that we've ever had in the White House.

The first lady's hard work has raised the visibility of child care issues in the administration, in the Congress and, indeed, in our entire nation, and we all thank Mrs. Clinton for what she has meant for all the children in our country. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Dr. Brazelton, I was wondering why you were oohing and aahing me when I walked in. You've built up all of our self confidence -- (laughter) -- and we thank you for -- I feel better already, so thank thank you very much for --

DR. BRAZELTON: (Off mike.) (Laughter.)

REP. CARDIN: Well, now I think you've gone too far. (Laughter.)

Nothing is more important to the daily lives of more American families than the availability of affordable, reliable, safe care for our children. Six out of 10 American families with children under the age of six have two working parents or a single parent that's in the work force. And this really struck home for me this past month when I became a grandfather for the first time. My daughter and son-in-law will be working. So for my daughter and my son-in-law and for

millions of similar families, child care is not a public policy issue; it's a daily struggle to balance the pressure to provide for their children with the need to make sure that their children are safe.

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Senator Dodd in the Senate has been real champions on this issue. Mrs. Clinton, I want you to know that I was joined by more than 100 of our colleagues in the House on both sides of the aisle, Democrats and Republicans, writing a letter to our Appropriation Committee urging them to include the entire increase in this year's budget in the House of Representatives. We need to get that passed this year. (Applause.)

In this time of budget surpluses, an increase in the Child Care and Development Block Grant is exactly the kind of wise investments we need to make in order to make our country stronger. If we shortchange child care at budget time, we shortchange our kids for a lifetime.

Again, Mrs. Clinton, I want to thank you for keeping this issue in front of the American people. Congratulations. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I want to thank everyone for participating in the study. We've got some of the people who have actually been the investigators, the researchers, the writers, members of the committee to fight crime, and everyone who has been a part of this, I'm very grateful to you.

I too want to thank our guests, who have been extremely patient (laughter) -- during this occasion.

And I guess we would just end by saying -- Barry and I were talking about this, and Ben, and Chris and I have talked about it, the attorney general and Eric -- we've all talked about this for so long because we know what the research shows us and we know what common sense, personal experience tells us. And I hope that we're able finally to make the case to the Congress.

And Sheriff, thank you for your eloquent and strong statement and your leadership.

And we will all be working very hard. But this is an issue that we can highlight here in the White House today, but we have to work hard on every single day to make sure that we translate the results of this report into the dollars that are needed so that we can fulfill the promise that the report gives us, that Dr. Brazelton is such an eloquent proponent of, and that is to make every child feel as wanted and special as possible, because we know that's the best way to prevent any problems down the road.

REP. CARDIN: I testified before John Porter's subcommittee on Appropriations, and I can tell you that Congressman Porter was very supportive, is going to do everything he can, I think, to help us. So I think we have strong support among the -- some of the leadership on the House side to get this done.

MRS. CLINTON: And that's really key, Helen, because, as Chris said -- and you might want to add on that, Chris -- the Senate has passed considerable measures in the last couple of years.

Q (Off mike) -- added into that --

SEN. DODD: Well, that's so -- but last year four times the Senate -- four times the Senate passed, actually, the legislation on child care, and Senator Specter has indicated that he is going to support the number -- the president's number, the 817 million, getting up to 2 billion, for child care. So we feel very good about the strength we have, and with Ben's work in the House and the leadership out of the White House, all of that strength.

And events, frankly -- other events that have occurred -- tragic events, too often, are -- if there's a silver lining to any of these tragic events, it is because it raises the level of importance, the profile or the importance of doing more, as the sheriff has pointed out, early on with these children. And that aspect of this helps us tremendously.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, we have the sheriff, we have Commissioner Branton (sp), we have other leaders in law enforcement, if any -- if you'd like to add anything else to Helen's question. Bill or anybody, you want to add anything? (Pause.)

I think that the sheriff well said it when he described these young men -- and, I assume, some women --

SHERIFF SULLIVAN: Yes, young men and women.

MRS. CLINTON: -- but mostly young men -- that he's working with, who have dropped out or been pushed out and, you know, are really on the road to ending up as, you know, wards of the state in prisons or jails. And that's what we're trying to avoid.

And we've known this for so long. I mean, this is what must be a little bit frustrating for Dr. Brazelton and the experts who are here, who have worked in this field for so many years.

Can't we do something about it?

MRS. CLINTON: In fact, Helen, we now have a lot of research that, exactly as Dr. Brazelton said, you can identify in preschool years, and certainly by fourth grade, children who are on the road to the kind of violence and criminal activity that we're all trying to prevent. And, you know, for too long, a lot of these issues have been considered, you know, kind of luxury or marginal issues. Like, you know, when I talk about encouraging parents to read to their children, you know, people say, "Well, isn't that nice." But it connects to everything we're talking about, the more we can get parents involved in the lives of their children, the more we can persuade parents that even if they, themselves, didn't have that good of an upbringing, if they, themselves don't feel that well educated, that there are things they can do that will give those tools to their own children.

But parents need help. Part of the great success of these early childhood programs that Dr. Brazelton talked about is that they not only focused on the child, but they helped parents be better parents. They improved the family atmosphere, so that kids could break that generational sort of cycle of illiteracy and poverty and violence. And, you know, you can just see it in the faces of children, and we know that it will work.

So we're here again to really make a plea to all the members of Congress to see this, for all of the reasons that we have tried to convey today, as one of the very best investments our country could make.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

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