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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY  
BY CHANNEL 12  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Q Okay. Basically being here obviously shows something about home health care. Isn't that so?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. We're trying to expand the opportunities for older Americans and disabled Americans through better provisions for home health care, for community based care, such as adult day care centers, and for better use of our nursing homes, because we think that what we want to be able to do is to provide more choices to individuals as to what is the best care that they and their families and their physicians think is right for them.

Q Now the people of Rhode Island, if you talk to them, their fear is that the health care plan and perhaps their (inaudible) everywhere else is money. How much more money will they have to pay? How do you answer those questions when people ask them?

MRS. CLINTON: I ask them to look at what we're doing right now. We could not have a more inefficient system, financially, than the one we have now. Now, there are many things about the American health care system that are by far the best in the world. And we're going to try to preserve all of those.

But what isn't right is that we pay more money for our health care and don't even have as good results, in general, as many other countries do that spend less money. Now, why is that? Well, because we're spending too much for the health care that we get that is not available to all of us.

If everybody is making a contribution, then the contributions of everybody will actually be less. You know, that's kind of common sense. If something costs a certain

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amount of money and, you only have maybe half or two-thirds of the people paying for it, if everybody contributes, you can bring the cost down. And that's what we're going to be doing over the next few years.

Q You've talked about that we are essentially paying for it ourselves already. And perhaps the rich will pay more. Who will pay more, really, when it comes down to it?

MRS. CLINTON: You know, there will be some people who are not insured now who will pay more. And there are some businesses that don't contribute to their employees' insurance. And they will pay more. But they will get a discount. Small businesses and low-wage workers will be given a discount so that they can afford health insurance.

There are some who are insured now but don't have preventive care, don't have the kind of coverage of benefits that actually will save us money because if the only thing you've got is a bare-bones catastrophic policy, then you don't go to the doctor or the hospital until the catastrophe strikes.

If you have preventive health care, you might go to the doctor earlier so that he or she can tell you what you can do to prevent the catastrophe. So that will cost them more. But in general, most Americans, the vast majority, will pay the same or less for as good or better benefits than they have right now.

Q Okay. That's one thing that you have to sell now. Two weeks ago in the President's speech, he talked about the special interests who will oppose you. Who are the special interests, so that we know, so that the American public knows, who we're not supposed to listen to when they're trying to make their arguments against your health care plan?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think every American, when they hear arguments against the health plan, should ask themselves a couple of questions. Are these people for insuring everybody? Or do they want to continue only insuring people who will never get sick, which is the way insurance works today, unfortunately?

Are these people for providing comprehensive

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benefits? Or do they want us only to have bare bones catastrophic policies that won't take care of me in order to avoid expense? Are these people for simplifying the system or they still want to keep, you know, putting those forms out, thousands upon thousands? Are they for everybody having better quality by having report cards that will tell you what is good and what is not good?

Those are the kinds of questions that every American ought to ask themselves when they hear anybody criticize this plan. Then they ought to say, "What is your alternative? And how will it be paid for? And will it cover everybody and give them health security?"

Q Okay. So who are the big losers here? Is it the health insurers? Who's going to lose money?

MRS. CLINTON: Some of the big losers are people who make their living eliminating people from health care coverage. The way the system works now, we spend a whole lot of money deciding whether you're a good risk or a bad risk, and if you're a bad risk, how much more you have to be charged, if you've ever been sick before and have a preexisting condition. And that takes a whole lot of money.

We want to eliminate all of that. We want everybody to be covered. And if we do that, then the people who try to eliminate people from health care coverage, they're not going to have as much work to do. They're going to have to help provide better health care instead of eliminating people from health care coverage.

(The interview was concluded.)

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