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**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON
REMARKS FOR KAISER PERMANENTE EVENT
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 23, 1997**

Acknowledgments: Sen. Barbara Boxer; Mayor Richard Riordan; SBA Administrator Aida Alvarez; Dave Lawrence, CEO/Pres. Kaiser Permanente; Dolores Palacio [pah-LAH-kee-oh], Principal Mar Vista Elementary School; Dr. Sharon Levine; [PARENT TBD]; Lois Salsbury of Children Now; parents, students, teachers of Mar Vista Elementary.

Rep. James Rogan;

I am here to talk to you about something most of you have but many of you take for granted: the ability to go to a doctor for a checkup or if you are sick, to get medicine that you need, or to have an operation to make you healthy.

If we are going to give all of you the future you deserve, we must make sure that you can be healthy and ready for the challenges that life will bring. Too many children just like you all across America and all across California don't have that chance. Many of you here today don't have that chance, either. I am here today because we are taking a major step to change that, and I wanted to congratulate the people who are doing it -- and tell you why it is so important.

You have just heard from Dave Lawrence about the very important pledge by Kaiser Permanente to spend \$100 million to provide health care coverage for many children in California. It is a remarkable act of civic leadership and generosity that will make a difference in the lives of thousands of children and their families. I thank you.

I want you all to think about why this is so important. We know that we have the highest quality health care system in the world -- but in too many ways, too many Americans do not have access to the best that system has to offer. Today, over 10 million American children do not have health insurance -- 1.6 million of them in California. Nearly 40% of uninsured children go without the annual check-ups all children need. One in four uninsured children don't have a regular doctor.

What does this mean for our people? It means too many children have trouble seeing a blackboard do not get the glasses they need to correct their vision; too many nagging coughs go untreated until they worsen into ~~life-threatening~~ ^{more serious} conditions that may require costly treatments and lengthy hospital stays; too many parents face the impossible choice between buying medicine for that sick child or food for the entire family. We must do better -- and we can.

~~We cannot rest until more of our children have access to quality health care.~~ This national mission demands action by all of us, in every walk of life. When I spoke to the President's Summit on Service in Philadelphia in April, I said that while the era of big government is over, the era of big citizenship must begin. That means taking responsibility -- and that is what Kaiser has done.

~~We know how complex this subject is, and extending \$100 million of coverage is no simple task.~~ The steps that Kaiser has outlined to reach out to employees of small businesses, to work through the schools, and to encourage people to enroll in the Medicaid program are the kinds of smart approaches that can make a real difference.

We will never reach ^{all of us} all our children unless ^{our} ~~more private companies~~ do their part, as Kaiser is doing. But let's be clear: ^{that means} government must play its part, too. And step by step, we are making real progress. Last year, I signed a law that helps families to keep their health care coverage as mothers or fathers move from job to job.

Now we are taking the next step. As you know, we have reached a bipartisan budget agreement with the leaders of Congress. I said I wanted a balanced budget that was in balance with our values. And one of my top goals was to extend health care coverage to millions more of our young children. This balanced budget agreement includes ~~\$16 billion~~ to extend health care for uninsured children.

This was a tremendous breakthrough for all our children. Now, the congressional committees are working with us to write into law the details of this investment. I want everyone who cares about the health of our children to watch this process and make sure that we do it right. First, the coverage must be meaningful -- from checkups to surgery -- so that children get all the care they need. And we should ^{Make sure that this coverage is affordable} not charge families excessive new fees for this coverage. Second, we should cover as many uninsured children as possible, through state programs and the Medicaid program. Finally, we should really expand coverage -- not just use the new money to replace money that already comes from government or private insurance or charities.

This is a good example of how we can meet all of our challenges -- government and business, working together, everybody taking responsibility and everybody playing a role. All of you are growing up in a very hopeful time for our country. You will be seeing and learning things that your parents can only dream about. We want all of you to be as healthy as possible so that you are ready for the exciting and challenging times of the 21st Century. With the action announced by Kaiser today -- and with millions more children getting good health care through our balanced budget plan -- we are doing our part to give you the opportunity you deserve. The rest is up to you -- and I know how well you will do.

Thank you, and God Bless You.

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the best ways to empower local residents, to give them a stake in the community, and to increase the bonds that tie people together. So far, our successful economic strategy has helped 2.5 million people across America to become new homeowners. But, not enough of these homes are in our cities.

In the last four years, we have reduced FHA mortgage premiums three times to lower the average closing cost on a new home by \$1,200. Today, I am happy to announce that we are cutting the premium by an additional \$200 for families who buy only in our central cities. This special discount will bring the total reduction in closing costs to those families to \$1400. This city homeownership plan could make all the difference to a family deciding where to buy a home.

There is even more that we can do to promote homeownership in our cities. We know that many hard-working families who receive Section 8 assistance are ready to assume the responsibilities of owning their own homes, but need help to take the first step. There is now an innovative HUD proposal before Congress to allow those families to use their rent vouchers to help buy a home. And today, I am happy to announce that Freddie Mac will help us launch this homeownership empowerment voucher initiative by financing up to 2,000 of these mortgages.

Together with the "Office on Your Block" initiative I mentioned earlier, this represents a \$1 billion downpayment toward our number priority of strengthening our cities, family by family, house by house, neighborhood by neighborhood.

The fifth thing we must do is to improve our city schools and make sure that all of our children -- no matter where they live -- get the best education in the world. That is why I have made education my number one priority as President. We know one of the main reasons families leave our cities is because they don't believe city schools are doing a good enough job.

(and ensure all our child have the skills to use it)

There are many things we must do to reform education. We are working to connect every classroom in America to the Internet by the Year 2000, so that children in the inner city will have access to the same universe of knowledge as children in the suburbs. We are mobilizing 1 million ~~volunteers~~ *tutors* in our America Reads initiative, to meet our goal that every 8 year old will be able to read independently. And above all, we have challenged all of our schools to set and meet high national standards -- and city schools are no exception. I have challenged our nation to set high national standards for reading and math. We know that this won't be easy; we will have to demand more from our students, our teachers and our schools. But we know that if we don't do this -- if we accept the false idea that some children just can't learn, and should be moved from grade to grade before they learn the basics -- then we cheat them and our nation.

high expected for all children

I am pleased that Mayor Daley and the city of Chicago has moved aggressively to stop social promotion once and for all, and to take over schools that are failing. I am a strong supporter of public education, but I do not think we must defend or accept schools that aren't making the grade. We need to turn them around, not just in Chicago, but all over the country.

Sixth, we must do more to deal with issues of public health that continue to threaten the lives of our citizens. Let me especially mention the scourge of AIDS that has gripped so many of our cities. Last month I issued a call to find an AIDS vaccine within the next ten years. Yesterday in Denver, the other leading industrialized nations pledged to help us meet that challenge. Last week, the Department of Health and Human Services announced comprehensive new guidelines to help people with HIV and AIDS get the most up-to-date information on the dramatic new drug combination therapies -- including protease inhibitors -- that are helping to prolong lives. People with HIV and AIDS deserve the best possible care; this guide is an important step in raising the standards for that care.

Today I have outlined our urban agenda for the 21st Century, and I look forward to working with you in the coming years to put it into action. More initiatives and details are laid out in Secretary Cuomo's very compelling State of the Cities Report. And let me say that as we work to do this, we will continue to streamline our own efforts, the way you have streamlined city governments. Before I took office, HUD was a symbol of overblown bureaucracy -- a poster child for the failed policies that sapped our cities of their vitality. We have started to change that - but we still have far to go.

Six months ago, I directed Secretary Cuomo to undertake a complete overhaul of HUD and transform it into an engine of empowerment. I am proud to say that he has developed an exciting and thorough plan to make HUD smaller, leaner, and better. We are already seeing real results in the elimination of waste, fraud, abuse, and in the coming months, I know that Secretary Cuomo will make the new HUD the best partner you have ever had.

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Finally, I want you to think about one more reason why it is so important that we continue to renew our cities. In the 21st century we know that America will be more multiracial, multicultural and multireligious than at any time in our past. This growing diversity is already taking root in our cities. And it must be a source of strength, not division.

Just nine days ago in the city of San Diego, I called on the people of this country to begin a great national conversation on race, and to bridge our racial divisions so we can come together as One America.

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. That is why I am pleased by today's Supreme Court decision upholding the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to escape religious persecution and secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation assures that the religious liberties of all Americans will be strongly protected.] or...

[We must do everything we can to promote greater tolerance and freedom, including religious freedom. Today the United States Supreme Court held part of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act unconstitutional. We will study that opinion closely. Religious freedom is

central to the American system of liberty. Throughout our history, men and women have come to this nation to secure the precious freedom to choose whether and how to worship. This legislation reaffirmed that right. Although we are disappointed by the Supreme Court's ruling, we will continue to work to protect religious liberty to the fullest extent the Constitution allows.]

[And] [I]n this new era, our cities must be the wellspring of a renewed sense of citizenship that unites us across all our differences. We must define what it means to be an American by the duty we owe one another, and by the values and dreams we all share. It would be a terrible mistake for any group of Americans -- one city, one neighborhood, even one block -- to build walls of division, separating neighbor from neighbor.

It will take all of us, working side by side, to build the cities of our future. America's great mayors and great cities will lead the way. You are already showing us in so many ways how to live and work and grow together. You are sending a message to all Americans -- and to all the world -- that America's cities are on the rise, united in their diversity, providing opportunity for all of their people, and poised for greatness in the 21st Century.

Thank you and God bless you all.

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We have created a network of Community Development Financial Institutions that is infusing our cities with capital. And I am very proud that our bipartisan budget agreement specifically guarantees that we will more than double the CDFI fund. (from \$50 M to \$125 M)

We reformed the Community Reinvestment Act so that it works better to steer private capital from mainstream commercial banks into poor inner city and rural communities. Some experts estimate that the private sector has invested at least an additional \$100 Billion because of our CRA reform. That amounts to more than 70% of all the CRA investment since it was originally passed in 1977. Home mortgage lending to African Americans is up 70%, and to Hispanics it is up 48% -- in no small measure due to our CRA reforms.

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At the end of my first term, there were 860,000 fewer families on welfare than when I took office. Over the next four years, we need to move the same number of families or more from welfare to work. That's why I fought for a \$3 billion ...

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One of the last agreements we made in our budget talks, was to guarantee an additional \$10 billion for transportation over the next four years.

And our transportation proposal includes \$600 million over 6 years to help inner city welfare recipients get to jobs outside their neighborhoods. It is the “To” in Welfare to Work.

Draft 6/21/97 3:30 pm

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