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the signal accomplishments of the bipartisan Balanced Budget Act of 1997, which provided funds for up to 5 million of the 10 million uninsured children in this country to have health insurance—which means payments to the hospital when they go there. And so far, even though the enrollments have really picked up, this is the first full year when all the States have had their programs in place. Only about one and a half million of those children have been enrolled, a little over one and a half million. And I'll bet anything some of them who haven't are here.

The second thing I'd like to say is, I bet a lot of the working families here, who work for very modest wages, especially in the off-season, or the farmers who have very limited incomes, their children, and maybe even the adults who are working, could be eligible for Medicaid, depending on what the Massachusetts rules are.

The third thing I would like to suggest is that—in Tennessee, the legislature provided an opportunity for working people who had no health insurance to actually buy into the Medicaid program. I'm embarrassed to tell you I don't know what options exist in Massachusetts for that, but we gave them permission to do it in Tennessee because they devised a way to show that they could do it on the allocation of Federal money they had, and we could do it here as well if it's not being done.

So we need to look to see what kinds of other ways we can infuse cash into the situation. But, as Mike said when we started, one of the things we need to remember is that we all need health care. And when you show up at the hospital, they don't ask for your party registration. That's why we're trying so hard to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights down in Washington. Everybody from the AMA to the nurses groups to virtually every health provider in the country is for it—because we recognize this is something that ought to unite us as a people.

Now, it is a challenge when you have small populations and you want high quality care and you want it there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, whether there are 100,000 or 14,000 people here. But I'd like to say there are a lot of people who aren't here tonight on this island who make all of our lives better. There are a lot of wonderful people who live here and work here year round, and who would never be able, themselves, to afford the kind of vacations that all of us take every year and take for granted. And they deserve good health care, too.

So I am very, very grateful to you. If there is anything else I can do, Dr. Sullivan, and anybody else here on the board, to try to explore what else we can do to enroll more people in covered programs that we maybe affect the income stream here, I'd be happy to do it. I will do what I can to help. I'm proud of you for being here. But what I'd like to say to you is, I think you ought to be prepared to come next year, too. [*Laughter*]

You know, folks, I've raised a lot of money in my life, and I'm not running for anything. [*Laughter*] So I can spend the rest of my life raising money for causes like this, which I like very well. But I say that because—based on 20 years of hard work.

Again, I hope the island and the community and all of you can unite behind this hospital. But I know—and I will do everything I can to help explore what else can be done here. But you need to make a long-term commitment—if this community wants this hospital—that it is something worth paying for, because you never know when you'll need it, and you certainly know that good people need it and access it every single day.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:16 p.m. at the Farm Neck Golf Club. In his remarks, he referred to journalist Mike Wallace; philanthropist George Soros; and former Secretary of the Treasury Robert E. Rubin. The President also referred to AMA, the American Medical Association.

Proclamation 7215—Women's Equality Day, 1999

August 24, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The theme for America's celebration of the coming millennium is "honor the past—