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FROM:

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COMMENTS:

*Here's the draft of Mrs Clinton's
video presentation to the New
England Women's Health Care Forum.*

It should be delivered to:

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**WELCOMING REMARKS TO THE NEW ENGLAND WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE FORUM
MAY 22, 1995**

I am pleased to welcome you to the first New England Women's Health Care Forum, an exciting initiative to improve women's health care in New England and beyond. I want to congratulate the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts for taking the initiative to start this year-long endeavor to expand women's access to health services and highlight the issues that impact the lives of so many American women. Your efforts today and over the course of the year will not only raise public awareness of these issues, but will also change local and national policies and programs. As I know from my work on a plan for national health care reform, these local programs are inspiring examples of what we can accomplish when we come together to care for our community.

I understand that your panels today include a range of health care issues. I am especially pleased that the Forum has devoted a panel to breast cancer, a disease which impacts one in eight women and their families.

More than 44,000 women die annually from this disease. The most troubling part about breast cancer is that chances of complete recovery increase enormously with early detection. Even so, many women are not taking advantage of mammograms. To me, an annual mammogram is a habit that you just get into when you reach a certain age. I was surprised to learn that this was not happening with all women and that is why I have teamed up with Secretary Shalala to educate women about the importance of mammograms. Since breast cancer incidence increases with age, we began a Medicare Mammography Awareness Campaign to encourage older women to get mammography

screenings.

In 1991, mammograms were added as a covered benefit under Medicare Part B, yet fewer than 40 percent of women over age sixty-five use the benefit. As part of the campaign, I have traveled across the country to listen to senior women, doctors, and others and to raise awareness about the Medicare mammography benefit. I discovered that financial difficulties, lack of transportation to the doctor's office, misinformation about early treatment of breast cancer, and the fear of finding out that they may have breast cancer keep many women from getting regular mammograms.

With this in mind, I was delighted to see examples of successful outreach programs in New England when organizations hold house parties where women are taught how to do breast self examinations. We need to support and expand such educational programs. We also need to make sure that after a mammogram is done, there are providers ready and willing to conduct any necessary subsequent diagnostic testings and treatments, regardless of a woman's ability to pay.

Again, thank you all for coming today and for caring about the health of women in New England. By working together, meeting to discuss our ideas and our vision, by sharing our experience in our own families and our hopes for the future, we can make a real difference for women. Together we can keep the importance of these vital women's issues in the forefront of our government's health care decision making process.