THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 24, 1994

Mr. Harold D. Johnson, CLU
P.O. Box 2576
900 C Hammond Street
Bangor, ME 04402-2576

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Thank you for writing to share your thoughtful comments about the need to bring health care costs under control.

Only with universal coverage will we be able to slow steadily increasing health care costs. Today, when people without insurance seek emergency medical attention, they get the health care they need. However, since many are unable to pay their bills, those people with insurance pay higher prices to cover the costs of this care. According to the Congressional Budget Office, experts estimate that $25 billion in health care costs are shifted to people with private insurance. Without universal coverage, cost shifting and the need of individuals without insurance to rely on emergency care will persist, causing health care costs to continue to skyrocket.

As Dr. Rashi Fein, Professor of Medical Economics at Harvard University, has stated: "We cannot have real savings and real cost containment without universal enrollment. Such enrollment is not a welcome bonus delivered with cost containment dollars; it is what makes cost containment possible. Only with universality can we eliminate the practice of making patients with insurance pay the medical costs of those without it." (The New York Times, October 28, 1993)

Thank you again for writing. The President and I look forward to continuing to work to guarantee health security to all American families.

Sincerely yours,

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton

cc: The Honorable George J. Mitchell

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 28, 1994

Gene M. Royer, D.O.
Family Medicine of Fryeburg
114 Main Street
Fryeburg, Maine 04037

Dear Dr. Royer:

I am sorry I did not have a chance to speak with you at the Maine Forum on Health Care Reform, but I am very grateful to have your paper on rural health care in America. The President's proposal for health care reform seeks to remove financial and non-financial barriers that limit care for Americans who live in rural communities.

The President's plan creates incentives to improve the availability and quality of health care in rural areas. The plan will increase the number of physicians and health professionals in rural areas by expanding the National Health Service Corps and creating tax incentives to encourage practice in medically underserved areas. Technology can also play a major role in bringing state-of-the-art medical care to rural areas. The plan includes initiatives to develop communications links between rural health professionals and academic health centers.

The Clinton plan includes specific initiatives to increase and strengthen community providers. Federal grants and long-term contracts are available to expand community-based networks of health providers and plans. In addition, local hospitals, clinics, doctors and other health professionals may be designated essential community providers. To support the adaptation of those critical providers to new requirements under health reform and to assure that patients in rural areas are adequately served, the President's proposal requires health plans to contract with essential community providers for five years. At the end of that period, health plans must either demonstrate their capacity to provide access for all participants or continue contracting with essential providers.

Medical practices like yours emphasize what is right about our health care system and what we must preserve as we work to improve the availability and quality of health care in rural communities. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely yours,

Hillary Rodham Clinton

cc: The Honorable George J. Mitchell

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

March 26, 1994

Mr. David Allen
Penobscot Valley Industries
611 Hammond Street
Bangor, Maine 04401

Dear Mr. Allen:

Thank you for writing about the needs of people with disabilities. I remember speaking with you at the University of Maine and am writing to provide additional information about how health care reform will help people with disabilities.

For too long, people with disabilities have faced discrimination in the health insurance marketplace. Many are prevented from purchasing insurance because they have a so-called "pre-existing condition". Those able to obtain insurance are often forced to pay the highest rates. And many reach lifetime limits on benefits just when they need coverage the most.

The President's health care reform proposal will guarantee private insurance coverage to every American that can never be taken away. In addition, the proposal outlaws unfair insurance practices. It will be illegal for insurance companies to drop coverage or cut benefits, increase your rates if you get sick, use lifetime limits to cut off your benefits, and charge higher premiums based on health condition or age.

The comprehensive benefit package that will be available to every American includes health professional and hospital services, clinical preventive services, mental illness and substance abuse services, home health care, extended care, rehabilitation services, durable medical equipment and many other services that are essential to people with disabilities. You asked specifically about treatment for mental illness under the health care reform proposal. The mental illness and substance abuse benefit emphasizes a wide range of innovative treatment options, including case management, partial hospitalization, day treatment programs, and home-based and behavioral aide services.

In addition to the services in the comprehensive benefit package, the President's proposal expands long-term care services for people with severe disabilities, regardless of age or income. This new program will provide home and community based supports

for up to 3.1 million people. People who receive Medicaid and live in nursing facilities or intermediate care facilities for the mentally retarded will be permitted to keep more of their monthly income for personal expenses. The long-term care program also helps people with disabilities who work by authorizing a 50 percent tax credit, up to $15,000 each year, for work-related personal assistance and other services.

Thank you again for writing. I very much appreciated hearing your thoughts and concerns about health care reform.

Sincerely yours,

Hillary Rodham Clinton

cc: Senator George J. Mitchell

GEORGE J. MITCHELL
MAINE

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Office of Senator George J. Mitchell
Bangor, Maine Field Office

TO: Ms. Pam Barnett

FR: Clyde MacDonald, Sr. Field Representative for Senator George J. Mitchell/ Bangor

DT: March 24, 1994

SUBJECT: David Allen letter

COMMENT:

Per our conversation, the Bangor Daily News article

Thank you for your assistance

Pleas address letter to:

Mr. David Allen
Penobscot Valley Industries
611 Hammond Street
Bangor, Maine 04401

telephone 941-2898

Dear Hillary: David Allen is still waiting for a

Six weeks ago, David Allen stood in the center of the Alfond Arena, surrounded by 6,000 people, and asked Hillary Clinton what her health care plan would do for mentally retarded people.

The first lady thanked him for his question. Instead of answering, she asked for Allen's mailing address and promised him that she would send a detailed description of her plan's mental health provisions.

At Penobscot Valley Industries in Bangor, Allen's co-workers were euphoric. They cheered when he was selected as a questioner. They urged him on when he appeared on the television. They celebrated when Clinton promised to write.

Allen, who is mentally retarded, was shocked, thrilled and frightened. It was almost too much. But he was ready: He had been writing to politicians for more than a year with his questions on mental health funding.

He said his piece. He received a promise, from the nation's most influential voice on health care. He would get an answer.

Six weeks later, he is still waiting.

Steve Kloehn

Allen is a patient man, generous in his assessment of people, predisposed to think the best. He is also persistent. On March 14, he mailed this letter to the White House:

Dear Mrs. Clinton,

When you were at the University of Maine last month I spoke with you about the needs of people with disabilities. I gave you my address so you could send me information about this. I know you are very busy, I saw you at the Olympics in Norway on TV, so I just wanted to remind you that I am still waiting to hear from you when you get a chance to write. The group I am working with is anxious to know what President Clinton's plan has for people with disabilities. We are sorry to hear about all the trouble you have been having lately. We don't think you broke any laws.

Sincerely,

David Allen

Possibly Allen is right, and Mrs. Clinton has been so busy with games and scandals that her staff has not yet had the time to respond.

Perhaps it is naive to expect a first lady to write to somebody like David Allen — even if she enthusiastically said she would, twice, in front of thousands of people.

But if she expected him to forget, or give up, she guessed wrong.

Allen, 28, speaks haltingly and moves with difficulty, but he is not stupid.

He understands that in the halls of government, out of sight is out of luck. He knows that health care funding is up for grabs, and he knows how easily a group such as the mentally retarded could fall through the cracks.

Penobscot Valley Industries is a good example. The program employs 43 mentally retarded adults in its workshop and around the community. It is a bright spot in the murky world of privatization — it provides support, teaches independence, and costs less than a residential institution.

Penobscot Valley Industries receives three-quarters of its funding through Medicaid. Under the Clinton plan, Medicaid would end.

For Allen, then, the replacement for Medicaid is no insignificant detail. Nor are eyeglasses, groceries, transportation and the people who visit him at his apartment to help him live on his own.

Last year, when state funding for his group psychotherapy was cut back, Allen decided he needed to do something. He hand-picked four co-workers to help him.

The group now meets twice a week. Penny Gray, a social work student at the University of Maine, works with the group, asking questions, taking notes and typing letters. But the words, she insists, come straight from group members.

"I've been blown away since the day I walked into that place," says Gray. "If they have the information, they can make the choices."

The group has written, with mixed success, to Sens. George Mitchell and William Cohen, to Rep. Olympia Snowe, to Gov. John McKernan, to local representatives and to state mental health

Pam Barnett

an answer

officials. They wrote to President Clinton.

President Clinton sent a form letter and a photograph of himself. Snowe, on three occasions, promised to visit. Each time, she canceled. State Rep. Sean Faircloth, on the other hand, came on Monday and spent an hour talking health care with the group.

Allen does not ask that much of Hillary Clinton.

"I want a letter — anything about health care," Allen said. "I want to make sure we're part of the new law."

If courtesy does not move Mrs. Clinton to write, self-interest should. For one thing, Allen and Penobscot Valley Industries offer a few good lessons on how sensible health care can cost less, an example of what works.

For another, the Clinton health care plan suffers from the widespread fear that the president and his wife promise more than they can deliver. This is one small promise that is easy to deliver — 29 cents will do it.

She should remember, too, that David Allen votes. So do several thousand more Mainers who, back in February, happily took the first lady at her word.