

Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) spoke emotionally about pre-existing conditions, women's health care and the economic necessity for reform during a White House Health Care Summit.

"Every American should be treated the same," Slaughter told a room of bipartisan leadership from the House and Senate along with President Obama, Vice President Biden and Secretary Sebelius.

Slaughter talked about a woman from Buffalo who couldn't afford her own dentures so instead wore a set of dentures from her deceased sister. "Do you believe that in America that's where we would be?" Slaughter asked.

Slaughter learned of the story while in Buffalo from Dr. Lavonne Ansari of the Community Health Center of Buffalo who spoke passionately about one of her patients. Dr. Ansari and other joined Slaughter at a press conference in her Buffalo office in November.

A transcript of her remarks are below.

Congresswoman Slaughter's Remarks:

Thank you Mr. President and thanks to my colleagues who are here. I am timely and will not take up a lot of time, but I do have to say some things.

The first is that preexisting conditions have to go. It is cruel and capricious and done only to help the bottom line. This was not even anything we talked about 10 or 15 years ago, but I mentioned that all Americans should be treated the same. Let me give you a history.

Eight states have declared that domestic violence is a preexisting condition on the grounds, I assume, that if you have been unlucky enough to get yourself beaten up once, you might do it again. Forty-eight percent is the higher cost for women to buy their own insurance. Believe you me that is really discrimination.

In 1991 women were not included in the health trials because we had hormones. It wasn't until we had a critical mass of women here that said this will not do for more than half the population of the United States who pay taxes and we made certain that diseases like osteoporosis and cervical cancer and uterine cancer were looked at. Up to that point, 1991, all research at the institutes of health was done on white males. Think about that a minute, if you will.

We couldn't do that because we said can you stop doing that? It took legislation. Doing this will take legislation. I have been through this before. I was here when we had the Clinton debate. It started, some of you will remember, by Lee Iacocca who said we cannot export automobiles. There is a \$1,000 cost for health care in every one of them. My competitors are way ahead of them. They are eating my lunch. That was one of the main reasons that we decided we had to do something about that. In the 13 to 15 years since that happened, we have done nothing about health care, and don't export so much anymore and the automobile business is basically gone. We have done nothing to encourage entrepreneurs. We need to think about the economic benefits of doing this. They will reduce trade policies and let us make something else in the United States and really want to make sure that it succeeds and this would be a great part of that. I think it's terribly important that we do that.

Also since the Clinton health care plan, we have seen awful things. We saw hospitals abandoned to the streets. Critically ill, elderly, mentally ill persons and there was no great cry out there. Now I understand there is actually a proposal which god knows I hope never sees the light of day that shot down Medicare and turned it into a voucher system. Obviously we were not paid the full cost health care as they go to the public market to try to find something. What are we going to be doing then? Once again abandon our elderly and mentally ill and our seriously ill to the streets. We are better people than that. It would be a good thing for us while we are here in this room together to think about what's important here. Not nitpick, but think about all the people out there every day, the number of people that have excess deaths because they have

no health insurance.

I have a constituent that you won't believe and I know you won't, but her sister died, this poor woman had no dentures. She wore her dead sister's teeth which of course were uncomfortable and did not fit. Do you believe that in America that's where we would be? This is the last chance as far as I'm concerned on the export business. We have fallen behind and no longer the biggest manufacturer in the world and lost our technological edge. We have an opportunity to do that, but the major part of the success of that is getting this health care bill passed. Thank you very much.