

*Remarks for the
National Health Center Week Press Conference
August 8, 2003*

- Recognize Robert Pugh of Mississippi
Primary Health Care Association

- I'm happy to join you today in celebrating
National Health Center Week

- I am honored and it is indeed a pleasure to
be surrounded by so many people who care
deeply about the health and well being of
Mississippians

- Healthcare is not a privilege to be enjoyed by just a few
 - Nor is it a partisan issue over which we should become divisive
 - Instead, to ensure quality health care for our people
 - We must work together
 - To find affordable, accessible solutions

- By bringing people together,
 - Community health centers are helping to make that happen

- I am proud to know that this program is supported members of both political parties,
 - As well as President Bush

- This partnership is a testament that Government does not always have all the answers

- Through a partnership of public and private interest,
 - Community health centers provide economic opportunity
 - Not only through the jobs they create
 - But also through the services they provide

- This venture shows that private enterprise believes
 - Healthy citizens make a better workforce for today and tomorrow
 - Healthy adults wake up ready to go to work
 - Healthy children go to school ready to learn the skills necessary to be productive members of tomorrow's workforce

- In 2001 Mississippi Health Care Centers provided health services to 268,326 Mississippians
 - Their doors are open to all seeking health care
 - Who otherwise would not have had access to care

- A continuing focus on primary care and preventative care will benefit Mississippi for years to come
 - It is in our best interest to treat health concerns before they become problems
 - It is far less painful and expensive to immunize a child today than it is to treat an illness tomorrow

- I'm proud to say Mississippi ranks 5th in the nation
 - for early childhood immunizations
 - But we must not be complacent
 - We must continue moving forward

- By working together with public and private partnerships to address health care
 - we can make tomorrow,
 - the coming months
 - and the coming years
 - brighter for all of our children

- *Read proclamation, then ask Robert Pugh to make remarks*