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**Confronting the Chronic Care Challenge
Closing Remarks
Partnership for Quality Care
March 19, 2008**

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ANDY STERN: Alright, where is that announcer, that's the most--amen. Thank you all for spending time here today, I know for someone like me that who doesn't spend a lot of time really digging down deep into the quality issues, it's really fundamentally amazing how much we know that we didn't know several years ago. And it just says to me that what Secretary Levitz says a lot, and I think many people in this room have proved it in practice, that if we could only move from a healthcare sector to a healthcare system we could actually deliver these best practices all throughout the medical establishment. And that's what I think we're about to try to do in this country, and that's what I want to close this out by saying.

You know, we meet at a time when we're at a historic crossroads, I think, of change in our healthcare system. Every once in awhile, we saw it in 1992, a moment comes where our nation is ready for change. And I think this presidential debate has said that our moment is about to arrive in 2009. And the question I think we can frontier today is how do we add to the dimension about coverage, the issue of quality. And I think what we hope to do in the Partnership for Quality Care is just that, to be a partnership about injecting, I'd say, the most significant issue that will relate in the long run to

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affordability, is how do we have a quality system as well as a healthcare system and not a healthcare sector.

But what's striking when you see this is you appreciate for all the incredible work that people have done. For too many people, their only healthcare plan is a prayer when they go to bed at night, their only doctor is the emergency room, their only way of paying their bills is, unfortunately, is imagining going bankrupt. And so I just say, because having come out of the California system, I think the one lesson we need to always appreciate is it's is not about having more debate, it's not about having better policy. It really is about politics, and most importantly, leadership.

And the road to change in healthcare is littered with failure. Failure because we have dreams of perfectionists like all of us are, who can't kind of come to grips with perfection is sometimes the enemy of the good. We understand the road to change fails often because it's guarded by the assassins of the special interests, and in California and other places we can always find someone who doesn't feel like their needs are being met, and therefore kill the entire opportunity for all of us. And too often we find, and I could say this for the labor movement, that those of us that are privileged to have healthcare don't quite appreciate what it meant in California to have 5 million people who could have woken up today with

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some hope that they were on the pathway to coverage, who now are waiting for another moment of time.

We should not let this moment of time pass in America ever again. We are prepared in our union and with this partnership to do whatever it takes with all of you to make sure we create a healthcare system--one based on quality as well as coverage and affordability. And most importantly we do it together, because we are the caregivers of this system. We know what happens every single day, we know what's right, and we know what's wrong, and when we unite our voices we can create a healthcare system. And that's what we hope to do in SEIU, to not just talk about winning this election, but like we talk about in union terms, getting a contract. And the contract we want from this election, and the reason we're to keep hundreds of our volunteers and staff involved post-election. Because the contract we want is a contract where every man, woman, and child has quality, affordable healthcare. And through the Partnership of Quality Care, I think we can get that done. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

MALE SPEAKER: Ladies and gentlemen, George Halvorson, President and CEO Kaiser Permanente, and Partnership for Quality Care Secretary.

[Applause]

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GEORGE HALVORSON: Good afternoon. One of the things that drives me crazy about the healthcare debate nationally, is when we talk about Medicare. The actuaries who predict the demise of Medicare always assume that we're going to deliver care in the future as badly as we do it now. When they make their projections they assume that the population will get older, they assume there will be more diabetics, they make no assumptions whatsoever that we will learn anything about the actual delivery of care. And so as they're wrestling for solutions they talk about rationing care, they talk about denying eligibility to people, they talk about moving the eligibility age to an older age. And they don't talk about basically approaching the fundamentals of care delivery to cut the number of complications for diabetics, to cut the number of complications for people with heart disease, to do what you just saw in terms of cutting the number of complications and improving the care for people with congestive heart failure. They don't talk about actually making care better.

Now we're a coalition of people who deliver care. We are all about care. Everybody who is in this coalition is a caregiver. And as we look at the reform opportunity we have in front of us, what we see is there is a credible opportunity to make care better. We can make care better for people, we can reduce the complications of care and in the process we can

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reduce the cost of care. And that debate will not go forward unless we step up to the plate and show what can be done.

So this conference, today, has been about what can be done. You've done a great job coming forward with example after example of things that are actually being done that work, that improve the quality of care and change, the trajectory of care for the future in one site after another. But right now it's only happening in what site or another, it's not happening in a broad spectrum, and it's also not the commonly-held belief system of the people in Washington, about what the future of healthcare should be. People are still wrestling here with old paradigms, old belief systems, old approaches, old solutions and are not thinking about how can we significantly, substantially improve care.

Some of the people in the current presidential debate are actually far more sophisticated on those issues than in any prior election, and that actually gives me cause for some optimism. I think as we go forward, if we do what we are beginning to do today, and that is build a database about what works, build a belief system about what works, and to start sharing that, then we can create a healthcare debate that's far more sophisticated, far more focused, and far more likely to get us to the endpoint that we want to get too, which is an America where everybody's covered, and the care that people receive once their covered is the best care that we can get for

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the money we're spending. And we spend a lot of money in this country.

So I thank everybody here for being in this coalition, this is important work, you've done important work today. There will be a report that comes out of this meeting celebrating the things that work. And that report will get in front of people, and a number of us will go in front of members of Congress with that report, and we'll talk to people about what the next steps are. So thank you very much for doing this, keep the faith, and let's this time do it. Let's take it over the finish line this time. Agreed?

MALE SPEAKER: Agreed.

GEORGE HALVORSON: Agreed. Alright, thank you.

[Applause]

[END RECORDING]