

Thank you for this opportunity.

When I became Governor most unexpectedly on August 14, 1991, it was a steep learning curve.

My biggest challenge was universal health care.

Governor Kunin had started a program called Dr Dynasaur which allowed children under five and pregnant women to get health care if they qualified for Medicaid.

We were able to expand this program to all children under 18 in Vermont who were below 312% of poverty. Vermont has had essential Universal health care for everyone under 18 for more than-three decades, and I run into young people all over the country who are from Vermont and tell me how much that meant growing up both to them and to their parents.

Since then we have made little progress. While care has gotten much more sophisticated, the expenses have gone up at three times the rate of inflation for more that thirty years. While Insurance companies have greatly enriched themselves, average Vermonters have been driven into near poverty or worse by health care expenses.

It is time, after thirty years, and multiple failures at change, to say enough is enough.

We are not going to do the entire reform in one year but we have to stop making past failures and fears an excuse for doing nothing. And we can not make the mistakes we ar making in public education where we seem insistent on spending hundreds of Millions of dollars each year to prop up a system which is, like health care, failing to meet our needs.

The first and easiest step is to make primary health care universal and free. This is already true for Vermonters under 18. But this time we will pay the bill not the Federal Government.

This is urgent. Our primary care system is collapsing. One of the consequences is that people are not seeking care because they can't afford it which makes the ignored medical problems millions of Dollars more expensive later on. Or simply leads to much higher rates of death and disability among our adult population.

To say there is not the money to do this is simply false. The Federal government cut taxes for me and thousands of Vermonters last year. And they are cutting money coming to Vermont to pay for those cuts.

That's Vermont money not federal money they are giving away.

I would gladly pay what I paid last year if the money were used in Vermont to help my state to regain our footing and to fix our eroding health care system. But I would only pay

that extra if I knew it would benefit Vermonters, not build ballrooms or fund monuments to vanity in Washington DC.

Those tax cuts the the so-called beautiful Bills give us a great opportunity to divert our Money back to Vermont to our fellow citizens.

The American health care system gives great care to an increasingly smaller portion of our population who can afford it. Middle class Americans are increasingly going without. We can seize this moment to make real change and be an example for the rest of the country.

Or we can throw your hands as we have for decades trying to avoid the only solution which is universal health care. This is the first step. It is the least expensive and the most likely to make health care more affordable immediately Please do not to let this moment slip away as we have so often on the past.