



CMS 2010 BI-REGIONAL MEDICARE HEALTH PLAN COMPLIANCE CONFERENCE

Boston & New York – Serving Our Beneficiaries Together

Verbatim Transcript
Day 2 - Opening Remarks
Jaime Torres

>> SO, DR. TORRES IS WITH US,
AND LET ME GIVE HIM A PROPER
INTRODUCTION BEFORE YOU ALL
WELCOME HIM TO THIS PODIUM. DR.
JAIME TORRES WAS NAMED REGIONAL
DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IN
THE NEW YORK REGIONAL OFFICE BY
SECRETARY KATHLEEN SEBELIUS ON
APRIL THE 6TH, 2010. SO THAT
MEANS THAT HE'S JUST STARTED A
NEW JOB AND HOW YOU GOING TO
TREAT HIM? VERY WELL. AS THE
HHS REGIONAL DIRECTOR, DR.
TORRES SERVES AS THE REGION II
REPRESENTATIVE OF SECRETARY
SEBELIUS AND HE HELPS COORDINATE
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES AND
INITIATIVES IN REGION II, WHICH
INCLUDES NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY,
PUERTO RICO, AND THE U.S. VIRGIN
ISLANDS AND SEVERAL--SEVEN
TRIBAL NATIONS. HE WILL PLAY A
VITAL ROLE IN HHS' EFFORT TO
IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVELY THE

PATIENT PROTECTION AND AFFORDABLE CARE ACT, THAT'S OUR HEALTHCARE REFORM LAW ACT THAT WAS JUST PASSED. DR. TORRES EARNED HIS DOCTORATE OF PODIATRIC MEDICINE FROM THE NEW YORK COLLEGE OF PODIATRIC MEDICINE AND HAS A MASTERS DEGREE IN COMMUNITY HEALTH FROM LONG ISLAND UNIVERSITY. PLEASE WELCOME DR. TORRES TO THE PODIUM.

>> GOOD MORNING. HI. THAT WAS AN--GOOD MORNING.

>> GOOD MORNING.

>> A LITTLE BIT MORE COFFEE I THINK. WE DON'T ONLY NEED JUST WATER, WE NEED COFFEE ALSO. BUT THANK YOU--I WANT TO THINK NORMA, WHEREVER SHE IS FOR INVITING ME TO ADDRESS YOU HERE TODAY. AND ON BEHALF OF SECRETARY SEBELIUS, I WANT TO THANK CMS FOR HOSTING THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE. AND I WANT TO WELCOME YOU TO THIS SECOND DAY. I AM HONORED AND GRATEFUL TO HAVE BEEN APPOINTED AS IT WAS MENTIONED BY THE WHITE HOUSE AND SECRETARY SEBELIUS AS THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SERVING NEW YORK, NEW JERSEY, PUERTO RICO AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS. AND AS YOU CAN SEE BY MY ACCENT, I WAS NOT BORN IN BROOKLYN. I'M FROM PUERTO RICO, BORN AND RAISED AND CAME TO NEW YORK IN 1976 TO STUDY AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY AND MAKE THIS MY HOME. IT IS MY JOB TO REPRESENT THE SECRETARY AND THE REGION AND ENSURING THAT HER PRIORITIES ARE IMPLEMENTED AND CREATING A LINK BETWEEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION AND MANY OTHER FOLKS IN THE REGION. AND SHE WANTS ALL THE REGIONAL OFFICES TO BE REENERGIZED UNDER

THIS ADMINISTRATION AND FOR THEM TO BECOME AN EXTENSION OF HER OFFICE IN WASHINGTON D.C., SO WHEN I SAY MIKASA SUKASA REALLY MIKASA IS THE SECRETARY SEBELIUS KASA WHEN YOU COME TO 26 FEDERAL PLAZA. LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT ABOUT MYSELF. FIRST, I'M A PROVIDER. I WORK AS A PODIATRIST IN NEW YORK FOR 26 YEARS BEGINNING IN THE SOUTH BRONX WHERE I THOUGHT I COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MY COMMUNITY. SO, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE, LIKE MANY OF YOU I'VE SEEN A LOT IN 26 YEARS, I'VE SEEN PEOPLE LOSE THEIR LEGS BECAUSE THEY CANNOT AFFORD ANTIBIOTICS TO PEG, ANTIBIOTIC FOR FOOD, ALSO I'VE SEEN CHILDREN GETTING INADEQUATE CARE BECAUSE OF LACK OF ACCESS. AND ONE OF--AND I SAW MANY, MANY PEOPLE WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE AND ONE OF THE THINGS THAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE, YOU FEEL YOU LOSE YOUR DIGNITY. THERE'S NOTHING MORE HUMILIATING FOR A PERSON WORKING HARD EVERYDAY, COMING TO YOUR OFFICE AND SAID, "CAN YOU SEE MY WIFE? SHE'S BEEN IN PAIN FOR TWO WEEKS. I'LL PAY YOU NEXT WEEK. OR CAN YOU ONLY TAKE \$20 AND I'LL PAY YOU NEXT WEEK? I DON'T HAVE MUCH TO PAY YOU AT THIS TIME." SO THESE ARE THE THINGS THAT I BRING TO THIS JOB. I LIVED THEM FOR 25 YEARS. AND I ALSO WORK IN A COLER-GOLDWATER SPECIALTY HOSPITAL, WHICH IS A LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY HERE IN NEW YORK, PART OF HHC. ACTUALLY, IT'S THE LARGEST LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY IN THE NATION. SO THOSE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT I BRING TO THIS JOB, BUT ANOTHER THING THAT I BRING IS THE PASSION OF AN ADVOCATE AS FOUNDER AND

FORMER PRESIDENT OF LATINOS FOR NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE, WHICH IS A COALITION WITH SUPPORTERS IN 23 STATES, I WORKED VERY HARD WITH MY COLLEAGUES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION PART ON THE PASSING OF THE HEALTHCARE REFORM AND ALSO ON THE QUALITY IN HEALTHCARE. SO, I--WHEN I WAS ASKED WHAT CAN YOU BRING TO THIS JOB IN THE INTERVIEW LAST YEAR, THAT'S WHAT I SAID, I'M A PROVIDER AND I'M AN ADVOCATE. AND WITH THAT, I'LL BRING THAT TO THIS JOB HOPEFULLY TO IMPLEMENT NOW ON THE OTHER SIDE TO IMPLEMENT THE PASSING OF HEALTHCARE REFORM WHICH IS A MIRACLE THAT HAPPENED AFTER ALL THAT FIGHT AND ALL THOSE YEARS. BUT, YES, IN MARCH, FINALLY, THANKS TO PRESIDENT OBAMA AND THE CONGRESS, WE PASSED THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT WITH THE PROMISE TO IMPROVE THE HEALTHCARE DELIVERY SYSTEM TO REDUCE COST, TO MAKE COVERAGE AVAILABLE TO ALL AMERICANS AND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CARE. IT WAS A LONG BATTLE, WASN'T IT? BUT IT IS AMAZING THING THAT AFTER MANY GENERATIONS, WE'RE GOING TO HAVE REFORM IN OUR SYSTEM AND THINGS ARE BEGINNING NOW AND THINGS WILL TAKE A LONG TIME AND JUST THIS--IN THIS YEAR ACTUALLY, AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, WE HAVE--WE'RE GOING TO HAVE AN IMPROVED AND ENHANCED MEDICARE. WE'RE GOING TO CLOSE THE FAMOUS OF THE INFAMOUS DONUT HOLE BEGINNING WITH A \$250 REBATE TO THOSE SENIORS THAT REACH THE DONUT HOLE THIS YEAR. YOUNG ADULTS WILL BE ABLE TO REMAIN IN THEIR PARENTS' INSURANCE FOR THE FIRST TIME UNTIL THE AGE OF 26. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, CHILDREN WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BE DENIED HEALTH COVERAGE BECAUSE OF

PREEXISTING CONDITIONS. AND BEGINNING IN 2014, EVERYONE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BE DENIED COVERAGE BECAUSE OF PREEXISTING CONDITIONS. THERE WILL BE THE END OF RECESSIONS, EXCELLENT. AND FOR THE--ALSO, SMALL BUSINESSES WILL BE ABLE TO RECEIVE TAX CREDITS SO THEY CAN COVER THEIR--MANY OF THEIR EMPLOYEES. SO EVEN THOUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF HEALTH REFORM WON'T HAPPEN OVERNIGHT, ULTIMATELY, YOU WILL HAVE ASSISTANT THAT PROVIDES MORE CONTROL TO CONSUMERS, MORE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR INSURANCE COMPANIES, MORE AFFORDABLE CHOICES TO THE UNINSURED AMERICANS AND THIS IS THE PROMISE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL KEEP AS WE CONTINUE TO MAKE THIS LAW A REALITY IN THE MONTHS AND YEARS TO COME. AND ANOTHER THING, ANOTHER CHARGE FROM SECRETARY SEBELIUS IS TO MAKE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES A DEPARTMENT WHERE EVERYBODY IS MORE COORDINATED WITH--EFFORTS WILL BE MORE OF A TRANSPARENCY. BUT ALSO MY JOB IN THE PAST, EVEN THOUGH, I WAS APPOINTED IN APRIL, I'VE BEEN HERE ONLY THREE WEEKS. SO, DON'T ASK ME ANY QUESTIONS YET. BUT ONE OF THE CHARGES THAT I HAVE IS TO MAKE SURE THAT ALL THE DIVISIONS WILL BE ABLE TO WORK TOGETHER. AND I'VE BEEN VERY AFFECTED AS I HAD VISITED CMS, HRSA, THE OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS AND OTHER DIVISIONS INVITED TO SPEAK TO THE DIVISION CHIEFS AND ALSO TO THE STAFF AND SOMETHING THAT I HEAR OFTEN IS YOU'RE THE FIRST RD WHO'S BEEN HERE, SITTING IN MY OFFICE IN THE PAST 20 YEARS OR WE HAVE NEVER HAD AN RD COME DOWN TO MY OFFICE, WE ACTUALLY HAVE TO COME

UPSTAIRS. WELL, I GUESS, WHAT I'M BRINGING TO THIS OFFICE IS AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY WHERE PEOPLE LIKE YOU--MY JOB IS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE LIKE YOU TO MAKE SURE THAT IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION, I'LL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE BEST INFORMATION POSSIBLE, THE MOST ACCURATE INFORMATION POSSIBLE. AND IF I DON'T KNOW IT, I PROMISE I'LL FIND SOMEBODY WHO CAN GIVE YOU THAT INFORMATION. BUT ANYHOW, WE NEED YOUR PARTNERSHIPS TO MAKE SURE THAT THE HEALTHCARE REFORM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN A WAY THAT WILL BENEFIT EVERY PERSON IN THE REGION. AND IT IS A BIG JOB TO FEEL THAT I WILL BE REPRESENTING PEOPLE FROM BUFFALO, NATIVE AMERICANS FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK, A PERSON FROM TRENTON, A PERSON FROM ST. CROIX; IT'S A BIG JOB TO FILL THAT YOU HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REPRESENT PEOPLE LIKE THAT, BUT IT'S A TASK THAT I HAVE TAKEN UPON MYSELF AND I TAKE IT VERY SERIOUSLY. SO, ON BEHALF OF SECRETARY SEBELIUS, I WANT TO WELCOME YOU HERE. WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT. WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE SURE THAT EVERYTHING WILL GO WELL IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AND, AGAIN, MY DOOR IS OPEN TO ALL OF YOU. MY EMAIL ADDRESS IS VERY SIMPLE. IF YOU WANT TO WRITE IT DOWN, I'LL BE VERY GLAD TO RECEIVE YOUR EMAILS. IT'S FROM MY FIRST NAME AND IT'S SPELLED J-A-I-M-E, IN SPANISH PRONOUNCED JAIME, JAIME.TORRES, T-O-R-R-E-S, @HHS.GOV. AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR THE INVITATION. THANK YOU, NORMA, WHEREVER YOU ARE. AND HAVE A GREAT TIME TODAY IN THE CONFERENCE.