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Conference (Closing Remarks) March 22, 1982

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(Parvin/AB)
March 19, 1982
10:30 a.m.

MRS. REAGAN: WHITE HOUSE DRUG CONFERENCE
SUMMARY REMARKS, MARCH 22, 1982

- Before I do anything else, I want to thank the wonderful speakers who joined us this morning. Important messages have flowed from the White House ever since it was built. But seldom has this house heard a message as immediately important to our children as the one this morning. And let me add, please don't leave, because we have a brief but major session following this lunch.
- As you may know, my husband has this habit of pulling letters out of his pocket and reading them. Well, I'd like to take a cue from him and read you a short excerpt from a letter we received not long ago. I can tell you, though, it is not light reading.
- This young man, who is a reporter, wrote, "Three years ago my 23 year old sister died from an overdose of cocaine. She left behind a 9 month baby, a husband, and her family. I still cannot believe she would use drugs and never suspected she did. Her death still haunts my mother and deeply troubles me. Perhaps other young girls like my sister and my many friends caught up in the drug world can be saved. At least I sure hope so." . . . Well, I hope so, too.

-- And that is why I invited you here today. Perhaps you will help. Because that letter is not a singular one. I receive thousands of them from all over the country -- letters of sorrow and confusion. Many times the letters are long and emotional as the parent or spouse or friend releases the pressure, and the hurt and heartbreak pours forth. Very often I get letters from young people who have fought and freed themselves of drugs and the lifestyle that goes with it. And almost always these kids offer to do whatever they can so that others won't have to endure the anguish they've experienced. I hope that today many of you will make similar offers of help.

-- This morning you heard the dangers and degree of drug abuse among our youth. I don't believe as leaders, as employers, or as parents, you can sit by while such destruction occurs. With all you have heard and learned today, you may feel overwhelmed. But we need not be overwhelmed by the drug problem itself. We need only take concerted, determined action. We genuinely can reduce drug abuse among our young people. It is a bully that simply needs to be stood up to.

-- By your leadership positions, I know you are activists; and by your very natures, you seek to solve problems. You and the organizations you represent are powerful and, in turn, can have a powerful impact on the drug crisis. I am asking

you today to use your influence, your energy, and your resources to prevent drug abuse.

-- You will not be working alone. We in the White House are anxious to provide support and ACTION stands ready to provide technical assistance. What is more, there is a Nation of parents, community groups and professionals out there that are longing to unite with you. We need you. We need you to help protect America's children. We can't afford to lose them. Please, will you join us?

(Parvin/AS)
March 19, 1982
9:30 a.m.

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