

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Our keynote speaker, really, really, really needs no introduction. I've met her with Dr. Leon Sullivan and I think at that time, it was Representative Smyre, and also Nate Miles of Eli Lilly, we traveled with Dr. Leon Sullivan to Africa to resend the Sullivan Principles in South Africa. And at that time, we had the pleasure -- I had the pleasure at that time of meeting one of the most dynamic personalities. She's a songbird, a conqueror, a actress. She was at the age of 17, by the way of Houston, Texas was discovered and all of you know that she is the original dream girl, the original. Not only had she received a Tony Award for Best Actress. She's also received Grammy Awards as the R & B female vocalist performance. She's had a number of top 40 hits and, you know, she has one song that I think all women sing and that's the one about I'm telling you. I'm not going. Alright.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sing it, Jennifer.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Men sing it too.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Oh, men sing -- all right. But more than that, she's recognized all over this country and she talks about her personal life. And she has brought awareness and consciousness all across this country when we talk about depression and mental illness. And never before have we had someone of such world fame to really step up and she has been a person that has really helped a lot of people. She's helped eliminate the stigma behind a mental illness and let's just give her a round of applause, a big NBCSL round of applause for Ms. Jennifer Holliday.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for coming. As the man kept saying, "Okay, they done interrupted our lunch and I don't understand." So, I hope that I won't be a disappointment and he can get back to -- he can -- he can get back to lunch. But as -- that was very unique. I've never had that happened before. "Hey, what is going on? They done interrupted our lunch? And I don't understand what's going on. Why we in here?" Well, you're in here because I'm in here. So anyway, I want to thank you all for having me here and allowing me the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon on, unfortunately, a topic that I know all too well, which is depression and mental health and suicide prevention. I just actually came back from Mexico. I was performing. I had to come straight from a boat here. I was performing for the Soul Train Cruise and as you may have known, Don Cornelius, committed suicide almost -- well, over a year ago. And so the cruise was a bit melancholy but we all gathered to pay tribute to him and to start something that -- we hope, the Don Cornelius Foundation, which is dedicated to depression and suicide prevention. So when they asked me to come, I wanted to say no because I was supposed to enjoy the rest of my cruise free and so I was like, "Okay, now, the free part, I'm going to have to miss." But because I had two shows to do and -- but I thought this was much more important and actually, you know, meant the -- meant so much because this is what we were gathering for. We were gathering to start his foundation for depression and here I am with you as you begin to do something that's even more important help to legislate get things more that people would need. So, of course, when you're looking through your topic and they say what causes it, so I can't speak to the medical part but the part about what it looks like, it looks like me. Meaning that, unfortunately, you

can't tell a lot of people who are depressed. A lot of people have this, you know, is a misnomer in terms of what they think depression looks like. Unfortunately, it also has a great stigma attached to, so those people who look like me and others who look quite perfectly well, hardly say anything that they're hurting, that they're in pain, that they have problems, that they are distressed, that they are contemplating taking their lives because of the stigma that's associated with it. And I tell people all the time that I'm in show business and it's far worse to have mental health problems than it is to be a drug addict or alcoholic, because you can go to rehab, people forgive you. They think it's cool, you know, they think it's some kind of sexiness to being, you know, all bad and all that kind of stuff. But once you tell people that you have some health problems, they're like, "Oh, oh, well, you know, she got a mental problem." You know, but suddenly if you do something that gets you into rehab, you get not only do you get a new job, but you get a bigger pay, you know. So it's unfortunate that something that caused us so much pain and that there's no outlet for people to talk about is just not embraced at all, not embraced at all. I have suffered from clinical depression for close to 25 years, 25 years and on my 30th birthday in 1990, I tried to commit suicide. And thank God, I'm here to talk to you about it, but -- thank you. But since that time so many years, I did not think I was going to make it, and so many people have gone. So many, not just celebrities but young people are taking their lives. The highest now among men who are taking their lives which not used to be in that category. So, and I heard that someone said that suicide had now replaced car accidents in terms of the highest amount of accidents and fatalities in accidents. So it is becoming not just a terrible epidemic but it's becoming something that people are just not dealing with. And in the African-American community, I think it still needs to be addressed. I grew up down south in Houston, Texas and down south as probably some of you know that a lot of things are just taboo and that's including -- that's including depression. And we are going to be, you know, I asked them, what you all were going to be trying to do and they said you're going to be trying to outreach with the faith-based community. Now, we tried this before with Eli Lilly, and myself, and Nate Miles, and all of us to work with the faith-based community. And here, not only do you have what is like taboo, but then you have just a sense of what they see as part of their religion and that they feel if you just pray everything will be just fine. And I just came back from a retreat with another religious organization. I'm not going to say the name, because I'm not trying to put any org-- religions down. But when they got to a part from a question from an audience and we were talking about just health, and they begin to talk about depression and the practitioner just flat out, denounced psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapy, everything. He just flat out, denounced it and just insisted that prayer was the only thing, and the reason for all of these things are things that are brought upon ourselves and he just went on and on. And I listened and I said, "Listen," I said, "I am sure, sir, you're not trying to say that anybody who needs help here should just be ignored, you know, and not get it," he said, "Oh, no, that's not what I'm saying." I said, "Yeah, because you're trying to say that that doesn't help, and I'm trying to tell you I'm here today. Thanks to good, good psychotherapy, a therapist and medication combined, and I'm here to live to tell the story. So you can't just pass all of that out." I said, "That's just not fair." He said, "Well, I didn't mean that." I said, "Yeah, but

you laughed about it too." I said, "I didn't--I fail to see the humor in that, you know," I said, "It was cute for your presentation, but it wasn't cute for those of us who've actually been through some pain, you know." So as we're trying to do this and I -- and I thought about it and, you know, just as I look at the people who have had to deal with their depression and not be diagnosed, properly diagnosed. It was many years -- because when you're looking at over 25 years ago especially when I think that I first suffered with depression which would be 32 years ago since Dream Girls. It wasn't really where people would said to me, "Jennifer, now you're thinking you may having some problems with depression," and, you know, because at that time it definitely was not addressed, in any society not, you know, not just Black or any or entertainment or anything like that. And so a lot of people left and say, you know, "Well, she's moody because she's, you know, she's a diva and, you know, and she's woman, and they're hysterical and they just have these mood swings, and we don't know." So they kind of left me to myself there for a couple of years. And so it was for -- it was a quite a while before someone came up to me because I also kept ballooning up in size. And those of you who may remember 32 years ago, I was quite a very large Dream Girl. And since then I've lost, you know, well over 200 pounds, 220 inches and closer -- thank you. Thank you. Yeah, I'm really hungry now too. I'm with -- I'm with him. Oh, he went--see, he done gone on to get his food. He left he said, she's not even -- I'm with him. I'm hungry but during that, you know, during that time no one really thought that depression was an illness. It was like, "Okay, something you could just shake off." I didn't know that there was really something as a legitimate depression. And so therefore, I also agreed with them. I said, "Well, they must be right. I must be just moody. I must just be temperamental or something else," you know, and it wasn't until many, many years until I came upon the right help. And then after I got the right help and had attempted the suicide in 1990 then Susan Taylor from Essence Magazine had some problems as well in terms of just getting letters from people who were suffering with depression and Phyllis Hyman had just committed suicide. And she said, "Jennifer, could you -- would you say something? I've got to address this. It's more people than you all that are hurting. And if you could say something," and I said, "But Susan," I said, "This will ruin my career." I said, "I can't say anything right now, you know, to until I can get some more things going." She says, "So, if you would." So, anyway, I went ahead and we came out with the story. She did a beautiful story and so many women began to come forth. And even as I travel, men also have found the courage to come forth. And just so that they could see that you could still function in life with depression but that there's help and that you won't be judged, and that you won't lose your jobs. That's the hardest part. I don't know anything about what kind of laws you all are trying to make, but that could be one that if someone legitimately comes up and they say they're getting help and they -- whatever that you won't write it down and if they lose their job and lose their sense of dignity and purpose, you know. So if anything for that and I had lost a great deal of hope and, but when I am able to go forward now, and it's not just my sense of my work but my sense of just being accepted as a -- as a human being. The more that people talk about these -- the different kinds of depression, like I said, I was diagnosed with clinical depression. We know that many other forms of depression and with varying, you know, degrees of treatment of what they

need. For me, I think that what I had wanted to say to people that because when I first started being diagnosed and going through depression. I could afford help at one level, and then I had many low years in between there where the music industry had changed and I had to have a licensed clinic -- clinical social worker. And I wanted people to know that \$35 treatment was the same as \$250 treatment. The thing was to go and get help and to know that it was available for you and to find the courage, you know, the courage to do that. And so for me, I was -- I look at life with a different kind of hope that I want to spread for people and I wore pink today for two things. One, to honor breast cancer month, but the second, to just have a life-affirming color on. It's my birthday month and on October 19th, this coming -- next Saturday, I will be 53 years old and I never -- I never thought I would make it. And it's just -- it's just one of those things where you look back in awe, but you look back more so with the greater sense of wanting to give and wanting to share. So I do something different in all of my speaking engagements. And I sing, and I was -- I was -- I was in Japan and all. And as I travel around the country, but when I was in Japan and I had to speak with women there because, I don't know if you're familiar with Asian culture, but they suffer a lot from depression and specially the women because they feel, you know, suppressed and stuff. So I was speaking to a women's group and -- so they have an interpreter, you know, going, and the translation, so a lot of times, to me certain things get lost in the translation. And as I could see their faces, the women were -- they were looking and they were listening to the translation, but -- to me, I just felt they're just like they were looking at me, I said, they're listening to the transla--, they're looking, but can they hear what I'm saying. So then I started to sing, there was no translation during -- like the singing and I saw the faces, the look on their faces. And even some of them of I felt a connection with them through song. So afterwards, they came up to me and they said, "Oh, thank you," you know they're very gracious people so they bow you, you know, a lot, you know, and they bow, bow, yeah, the bow, bow, but so anyway, so they're very gracious. And so they said, "Oh, Jennifer-san, you speak-a-sing, you speak-a-sing." I said, "You know what? And that's what I'm going to do from now on. I'm going to speak-a-sing." Because sometimes, because I'm not like a professional, not a professional speaker, not an expert on anything that has anything to do with medicine or anything. Not an expert on nothing but just me of how I made it and how I survived. So therefore, sometimes, songs or something like that help. So this first song of that I want to sing for you is just a song about believing and having hope, because a lot of things which people don't tell us, which our parents don't tell us, grandparents, everything, is that everything does not have to do with us in life, life is just hard, so you have to expect ups and downs and how do we weather storms and coping. We're not taught coping for the principles right off the bat. And we're not taught that we're going to have to deal with life on many levels. So a lot of things I think adds to our depression. A lot of times, I used to think I was the only one in the world that suffered from depression. I used to think that I was obviously so weak that I couldn't shake this depression, that I didn't understand about it. So a lot of times we think that it's only us. And because of the depression had robbed my life and so many years, I had lived in darkness, unnecessarily, because I didn't ask for help or I was too ashamed to reach out for help. I figured life would be over. And I said, "Okay. Well, you

missed a great deal of your life because of depression and you couldn't move forward so therefore, you know, a lot of things are going to be behind you and you're not going to be able to dream new dreams. Whatever your goals were, you're not going to be able to do it because you're older now. You're just going to be too old." And so I'm very grateful to say that you're never too old to start your life again. It doesn't matter when you get it as long as you get it. And I tell people they get greater later, so all you have to do is just hold on because your years -- your years maybe your best years in the -- in the latter ones. And that's what's happening to me. So even though I had to take many detours and I'm on a great journey now towards healing and now a new-found life of not only just music but personal life. And so this first song that I'm going to sing to you is called "There's A Dream Out There with Your Name on It." [SINGING BEGINS] Stay strong, I tell myself, when things are going wrong. Those times I longed to be a winner, as I see my chances growing dimmer, I hold on to a memory. I've had a hard life. But I'm moving ahead because my life has just begun. I've seen the rage of stormy weather, but there's rainbows there and things will soon get better. So hang on, because there's a dream out there with your name on it. There's a wish somewhere waiting for you. There's a star in the night whose light will be shining brighter when that dream with your name on it comes true. Stand tall, don't you ever be afraid. You're sure to find your way. And when that voice from deep inside you says to take a chance, that's what you've got to do. Follow your heart, go where it leads you, it's telling you. There's a dream out there with your name on it. There's a song somewhere to lighten your heart. There's a strength from within that you can depend on when it seems that your schemes are falling through. Here's what you go to do, you got to tell them to hold on, don't ever give up. You got to believe in yourself. Hold on. Because there's a strength from within that you can always depend on when it seems that your schemes are falling through. There's a dream out there with your name on it. Yes it is, oh, it's -- oh, it's somewhere just waiting for you. There's a star in the night whose light will be shining brighter when that dream with your name on it comes true. Don't you ever give up. Your dreams will come true. [SINGING ENDS] Thank you, thank -- oh, thank you, no, no. Thank you so much. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you for saying speak-a-sing, speak-a-sing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Speak-a-sing.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Thank you so much, thank you. So I'm very grateful, very grateful to be able to go out and my music and my voice, everyone of course, you know, Jennifer with -- you know, with the voice, and for so many years, you know, I was, I was just that. It was just the voice and nobody even asking "How are you doing? How are you feeling? Anything you need, whatever." And then as the years like I said as we begin to learn how to make life work, you know, some of us just don't know how to make life work and that doesn't really have anything to do with the depression or anything but it adds to it. It adds to it. And as I move along and my music brings joy in itself and -- it's also I'm very grateful to -- for that and so I used the voice -- my voice to help raise money not only for depression but so many causes. Because in giving, I have found that that is just a wonderful way not because it's a great thing to do, but it's a wonderful way to take away from ourselves that our problems, uh, not that they go away but they

just seem so insignificant when we're helping others. So I always tell people to give. And I got -- I received an honorary doctorate from the Berkley College of Music. And they had given me this, because I have worked with them for three years on depression. And what happened was they had a group of young people that were threatening suicide pacts. And so they were very worried, so they gave me a call, and they said, "Oh, you know, Ms. Holliday, we were wondering if you could come and speak to our young people, our students on depression." And I said, "Well, you know, I don't -- I don't have any young people of my own. And so therefore, I don't know if I really relate to children or young people." I said, "And I -- you know, I don't really know, I don't know anything about college, I never went to school, to college, so I don't know -- I don't know how I could help you." And they said, "But you're on, on television." So at that time, I was on a show called Ally McBeal, and I don't know if many of you have got a chance to work that. So I was on Ally McBeal and they said, "Yes, but you're on television. And the fact that you will speak about your problem on -- and you're on television would at least get their attention. That will at least get them to come and to talk about this because we don't know what to do." And I said, "Well, I mean, I guess what do you want me to talk about?" And they said, "Well just, you know, just tell your story and just tell them so that they could see," and that's why I keep going back to what it looks like because for them, I looked okay. And because I was on TV, I must -- everything must be all right in my life and in my world. So for me to come and stand, so anyway I did it and the first time I spoke with them and we did a Q & A, you know, question and answer period, I couldn't get anyone to ask me any questions or anything. And so I said, "Oh, my goodness," I said, "I don't know if this went well." And so the President of the university came to me, he says, "No, I think it worked fine." He said the fact that you came. He said, "So maybe we could do it again in about six months." He said, "Because I can't let these young people go. I'm concerned about them." And I said, well I told them that if you would set up a line of privacy, that they would have privacy, if they call you, I said, and I'm serious. I said, they can't get like kicked out of school or any grade or anything like that and I said. And I'm going to make that announcement and you will have a hotline set up. But you won't be trying to trick them. I said because that's going to set them back and that's going to be devastating. So sure enough, two weeks later, I left and they said, "Ms. Holliday, you won't believe it. We're flooded with calls with the young people asking for help. So instead of coming back in six months, can you come back in three months and we could set it up better." So I come back and this time I talked to them and this time I have lots question and lots of answers for them. And they were able to open up. So I asked the president, I said well, "I want to try an exercise, because it was a lot their first year of college." So like I said, I never went to college so I guess the pressure of being, uh, a new student but also the pressure which I didn't know about this because I had a great mother who just -- whatever I wanted to do sing or being schooled, she was not trying to influence but they said that a lot of those students were having problems because the parents were sending them there, but felt that they were wasting their money, that arts were not important, why weren't they going to be doctor or why--. so many kind of things. And sense of worthiness so -- when you have a depression but then, you have a whole lot heck going with life. I tell people I lost 200 pounds but I still

had baggage, I was like okay. I was trying, you know, because if you don't work some of these stuff out, it doesn't matter about help or how much medication or something. So many things that need to work out, and at 53 years old, I'm still in therapy. You know, still in therapy, but I don't take medication anymore, but I still try to make a process to work things out because, you know, these are the things that add to a depression or caused you to have a set back or caused you to just, you know, go and do suicide and what people don't understand about suicide, because I've had so many friends and people that I know who have left. And the thing about it if you don't -- the trick is -- the problem, when they stop taking the medication and you're doing all right, then they stop everything. So therefore, you think you're doing alright so the medication everything and you don't really have anything to fall back. And then they stop the therapy, so then you go, "Okay. I'm okay and I'm not going to deal with some stuff." And I've had so many that people come and say, "Well, Jennifer, why did so and so take their life? I mean, they seemed so happy. We were just with them last week and they were laughing and they were talking." The thing is it if you have contemplated suicide for a long time and you feel that you have no worth. And you feel that you have no purpose and that you feel that you have nothing to commit to. It stays -- it stays there in your mind. The only thing is how you're going into it. So if you want to go quietly you hoard sleeping pills, if most men do it with a gun or and then for people who just want to make sure that there's no mistake, then it's even more dramatic. I had one friend who leapt to her death in New York. A beautiful singer, Susannah McCorkle, and she was happy but had problems with her record label and one day just decided to go so, it's a one way we can present -- prevent suicide by planning all the things, but some of them we are going to lose and the most I guess recent case you probably heard of was Pastor Rick Warren's son. And you would think, "Okay. Well, we can't help him there, can't help him there." So now unfortunately, I'm happy to hear him out speaking for this -- that faith-based need to do this -- because a lot of them -- and this is not me accusing them because I want to make sure that you're also careful in your language with the church people, okay. Alright? So that you all won't get red and kicked out, all right? So the thing about it, the thing is, you cannot come out the -- at them with anything about their religion, because they are based and rooted in whatever their religion, Baptist, 7th Day, whatever they are, Catholic, whatever. So what you have to come out with them is that it is a humanity position that this is a position that anyone should be concerned about in terms of compassion, that a person who is hurting and a person who is suffering that needs help should be able to get help. Now, whether the church is going to do the counseling or against medication, there are other things because their illnesses that cause -- help with depression, there's also medication that causes depression. So there are a lot of things that vary in it. So many years later, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. So I've had multiple sclerosis for 17 years. I have been blind. I have been paralyzed, and it is one of those where you have to go day by day. You wake up and you don't know what's going on, but guess what? Multiple sclerosis also carries with it depression and the medication for multiple sclerosis. Now they have a new one with less side effect but at the time when I was diagnosed, they had one particular one that you take one big shot once a week. Guess what the side effects are? Thoughts of suicide. Thoughts of suicide, so see

what you're dealing with, you're dealing with so many intricate parts. So therefore my thing, I say. If anything, go for how do we make sure people are not discriminated and judged and lose their jobs if they need help so that they could get help. And then number two, how do you make accessibility for help, you know, more much affordable because as you know medications for anything are very, very costly. So for me, I am one that definitely who loves the Lord and knows that God has kept me and brought me forward. But I also know that he makes everything. He makes doctors. He makes people who help you. He makes all of that. So therefore I go get help. Okay? I -- that's the part, what to do about it go get help. That's my part. So if help is, you know, available, so you know, so that you go get help that that there are places, and I do, I mean like I said, all religions we all read the -- out of everything that's interpreted so well, the Bible is the only thing that's like just so confusing for everybody in terms of everybody wants to interpret their way, but the way I read it in the Bible, there are plenty of places that said that you could get help and if you, I send you help, go get it, take it. You know, that's what I saw, that what I read, that's the part that I read, you know. And so those are the kind of things that I just tell people, you know, not to be ashamed, number one, and for them to recognize their worth and for them to have the different kinds of activities, especially to know their worthiness and to know their life. And for me two things, when I was stricken with multiple sclerosis, and that's another illness that takes time to be diagnosed, it would took them three years to diagnose because the symptoms are so much simpler to whatever. But then when I couldn't walk then they did the spinal tap and they did all this stuff. They said, "Miss Holliday, it's conclusive you have multiple sclerosis." "Okay. Fine," you know, but then everything with our attitude what is our attitude toward our pain, our disappointments? And so when they told me and they said, "Well," I said, "And the reason why -- since you don't know what multiple sclerosis or everything that causes it, so what do you think the reason is that I can't walk?" And they said, "Well your mind is not sending messages to your legs, your brain to your legs to walk." I said, "Why? I didn't even know that was how we walk? We send a message?" I was like -- but my problem was I already knew I had one disease in my brain. I already had a disease and that was -- that was depression. I had one. So my thing was like, "Okay. I can't have two brain diseases. One of 'em gonna have to go?" And so since I knew exactly what depression was and there was more help for depression than for my MS, I said, "Then let me go try to tackle my depression. What kind of things to help with my depression? Okay. Number one my therapy, my psychiatrist, you know, getting help there, that helps my diet, I'm a stickler for my diet helps. I exercise that helps, but also more importantly than anything, I had to decide that I was worthy enough to choose life." So I had to choose life, so in choosing life, no matter how hard it was, then that means I deemed of my own self to know that I was worthy. Then how do I have purpose? Well I had purpose by giving back. So in spite of my two illnesses that I now have, I decided I still was going to give. So I used my voice to raise money for many causes all over. As much as I can to help people as much as I can. So I do that, and then also if a person has some kind of structure and you become some kind of support basis. So if the church doesn't provide it, then we have to know that there is other communities or groups. So I used to take people to group therapy. I never knew the importance of group therapy



before, until you sit there and you, you feel the sense of that you're not alone and that people understand you, not that you're some kind of outcast group or something. These are like wonderful people who are all doing things. So they're so many ways in this, you know, that you can choose to move forward and all of these, these really tough things that you have to put together, like I said especially if you want to involved faith-based and all these other elements and especially in the Black community, in terms of what it's looked at because we come from a history of being a tester for so many things. And therefore, it's just a taboo and it's just a sense of scared-ness and that's also done by Hollywood, in terms of what they think that a depressed person or mental ill person looks like. So, the greatest thing for me has been God's love and his comfort, and as we move forward and we help more people. So, I want to leave you with a simple prayer and then we're going to take some questions, Q & A, if you have it. This song is called "Come Sunday." [SINGING] Lord, dear Lord of love, God Almighty, God so high above. Please look down and see my people through. Lord, dear Lord of love. God Almighty, God so high above. Please look down and see my people through. I believe God put sun and moon to shine up in the sky when the sky is gray I know they are clouds just passing by. Lilies of the valley, they need the toil of spring and flowers bloom in spring time and little birds sing. Often we'll feel weary, but God knows --he knows-- our every care, Go to Him in secret and He'll hear your every He'll hear your every prayer He will give peace and comfort to every to every to every, every, every troubled night come Sunday, ohh, come Sunday, oh that's the day. Oh- oh. Lord, dear Lord of love. God Almighty. God so high above. Please look down and see my people through, Lord, dear Lord of love. God Almighty. God so high above. Come Sunday oh come Sunday, that's the day. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay, that's fine.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: All right. Let's give her another hand. Outstanding, okay.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: We're going to have 10 minutes of Q & A and I want to ask that give your name for the record and so, at that this time we'll entertain.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, let her keep on singing.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: That's up to Ms. Holliday.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: It's therapeutic.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: It's therapeutic?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: And I'm tellin' you--okay, hold on.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Well, okay. So I will honor this request to sing one more song and this song that they're requesting is, of course, what they call my signature song.

AUDIENCE: Yeah.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: And even though -- and even though it is a great love song, not just because I sing it, but you know, so many people all over, you know, always tell me, how this song has helped them and how it's saved their marriages, none of mine, none of my marriages, but keep hope alive, keep hope - - keep hope alive, you know. But people always ask me if I ever get tired of singing this song and I'm glad to say that I don't, because now it's a song of survival for me. I didn't have enough courage -- in 1990, I tried to take my life, but I have a lot of courage now and I fight for my life and I fight for other people's lives and so maybe this song can be that for you. Number 11.

AUDIENCE: [inaudible words of encouragement]

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: I love you too. [SINGING] And I'm telling you. I'm not going. You're the best man I'll ever know. There's no way I can ever go. No, no, there's no way. No, no, no way I'm living without you. I'm not living without you. I don't want to be free. I'm staying, I'm staying, and you, and you, and you, you're going to love me. Oh, ooh. You're going to love me. And I am telling you I am not going. Even though the rough times are showing there's just no way, there's no way. We're part of the same place, we're part of the same time. We both share the same blood, we both have the same mind, and time and time we've had so much to share, I'm not waking up tomorrow morning and finding that there is nobody there. Darling there is no way, no, no, no, no way I'm not living without you, not living without you. There's no way. There's no way, Tear down the mountains. Yell, scream, and shout. You can say what you want. I'm not walking out. Stop all the rivers, push, strike and kill. I'm not gonna leave you. There's no way I will. And I am telling you. I'm not going. You're the best man I'll ever know, there's no way I could ever go. There's no way. No, no, no, no way I'm not living with you, I'm not living without you. I don't want to be free. I'm staying, and you, you, you, you're going to love me. And you're going to love me. Love me. Love me. Love me. Love me. Love me. Love me. Love me.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: And you heard it live here -- NBCSL live, NBCSL live, Miss Jennifer Holliday. Let's give her a hand. Jennifer Holliday. Alright. Thank you so much. Alright.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Wooh, I'm telling...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Wooh, I'm telling you. Well, she told us what it is, what causes it, what it looks like, and she took us all the way what to do about it. Alright. Amen.

AUDIENCE: [inaudible]

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: I'm telling you, yes indeed, wow. Okay. Alright. Now let me -- I know they gave me a signal back there but -- alright. So...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Are you -- are you -- are they going to start something else now?

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Well, we're going to have a couple of questions at the most.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Okay. Alright.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: All right. I've gotten a signal. We got two questions, I think Internet question.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Internet question, okay. One Internet question?

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: One Internet question.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: All right. It's hard to come down once you get up like that, man, you keep on -- yeah.

REPRESENTATIVE GREG PORTER: Okay, okay, family, I understand we got two -- we got Internet questions. My name is Greg Porter from Indiana. The question is what are some holistic or alternative ways you have used to deal with depression? Yoga, walking, painting, et cetera?

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Actually, all of those. Like I said, I am very physical. So, a lot of people when I had -- was stricken with MS that also made me look at depression differently because like I said one of the symptoms of MS is depression, one of the side effects of the medication that I take is depression. So, being very physical has helped. So I'm very active even if I can't get to my exercise, I walk, walk, walk, And spend a lot of time, just really, you know, with meditation or breathing, or reading and loving to read, but then again, in terms of that, just reaching out for support system. Now, holistic things, then they're not going to like this. The diet really does affect depression. There are quiet a few things that if we're not feeling well also add to depression. So, I'm very stickler, you know, on my diet and that helps everything, you know. So, if you could find out, you know, from a nutritionist what kind of food or -- all bodies are the same, but all bodies are different, so something that may be causing you some extra anxiety may not cause me and then, for medication in terms of there's all kinds of health herbs that help calm us down, you know, St. John's wort. I won't list all of them because I don't want people calling me, trying to, you know, sue me. Don't be trying to sue, Jennifer Holliday ain't got no money. I ain't got no money, okay?

REPRESENTATIVE GREG PORTER: Alright.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: So, I'm just trying to tell you there are plenty of things that you could go online for many alternatives for medication and but there are no alternatives for counseling. I'm so serious about it that they really need to get some therapy and if your religion is very strong, there is Christian counseling, Christian counselors who know the Bible, who know that depression exists and that there is help for it. So, if you just want to stay within the Christian community, they can be found. Go ahead and Google those, you know, and -- but professional help is the most important even more so than medication.

REPRESENTATIVE GREG PORTER: Thank you. Incredible. Thank you so much.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Thank you. Yes?

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS (IN): I have a cousin that I'm very close to that is -- she's had MS for over 20 years like you.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: She's probably not as -- you know, and I know that depression and everything...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: ...goes along with that.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: Would you give me something to take back to her? Tell me something to tell her she -- in fact, I've just talked to her. She's supposed to go with us tonight and, you know, I don't know if she's going to physically, you know, be able to manifest because she's, you know, having pain right now.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Uh-hmm. And is she wheelchair-bound or...

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: She's not wheelchair-bound, but she...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Uh-huh.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: But she has -- her legs are, you know, she's -- when she starts to have a flare up, it's her legs that draw up and, you know...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: ...her toes...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Oh, yes, I know. Yes, I know, I have it.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: You know, the toes that draw up and the legs that draw up.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Right.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: And so, is there anything that I might be able to take to her or call her on the phone just now and say?

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: And is she our age or she's younger?

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: She is our age.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay. Well, the first -- the first thing, tell her that life is not over yet.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: That's right.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: That's the first thing. Okay? So, life is -- life is not over and then the other thing is that our attitude, no matter what illness we have affects everything that we do.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: Yeah.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: So, she has to really see joy in every moment. So, every day that I get up and I can see that I can see a little bit, I can walk a little bit, I try to get as much done on my checklist because I don't know if tomorrow I wake up blind, you know?

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: Right.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: You just don't know.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: That's the same -- yeah.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: We have effects and -- but once I wake up and I see that I'm not blind and I can walk, I get to walking.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: Okay.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: And I just -- you know what I'm saying? So, the first thing is with that attitude. The second thing for that pain, there's a lot of things that we could do. There are a lot of herbs that she could take for that pain, also a lot of oils -- flaxseed oil. A lot of things she's got to do -- get a -- get to a nutritionist, you know what I'm saying? Because doctors do what they do, they doctor. The rest is up to us, to take care of ourselves, it's really our responsibility. So, you got to Google, you've got to find other things, so a lot of the things -- I have the same pain and I have to perform, I have to do two-hour shows and I have to perform. I perform in pain because my mind tells me that the pain is there, but not greater than what I'm trying to do which is live life, you see?

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: I'm going to call her...

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: So, you just call her and just tell her that she -- the fact that she's not wheelchair-bound and the fact that she can see and the fact that she has some movement, she's still has things to do.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: Yes.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: Okay?

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: I will.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: So, tell her that.

REPRESENTATIVE VANESSA SUMMERS: Thank you.

MS. JENNIFER HOLLIDAY: All right.

REPRESENTATIVE JOE ARMSTRONG: Let's give, Ms. Holliday another hand.