

Press Release

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SCHAKOWSKY SUPPORTS BILL THAT PROMOTES HEALTH IT, AMENDMENTS TO PROTECT PRIVACY

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, today in a mark-up before the Committee voted in support of measures that would promote the use of information technology in health care and several amendments that would protect the privacy of patients as medical technology is updated.

Schakowsky's opening statement is below:

First, I want to express my support for the outstanding work that community health centers are performing in my district and around the country. The Health Centers Renewal Act is important both in recognizing the successes of health centers and showing our support for their continued work. As the number of uninsured and underinsured Americans continues to grow every year, community health centers are more important than ever. Not only do health centers serve a desperate need, they do so in a manner that reflects the characteristics of their communities and incorporates patient participation in their governance.

Second, I want to address H.R. 4157, the Health Information Technology Promotion Act. We are all aware of the enormous promise that Health IT holds in improving patient outcomes and reducing medical errors. Although many questions remain to be resolved, there is no question that Health IT will be the face of medicine in the 21st Century. In order to ensure that its benefits are widely realized, we need to provide the medical community - particularly safety net providers and providers serving medically-underserved populations - with the resources they need to join the move to Health IT. I will be supporting amendments to provide the grants, loans and technical assistance needed to accomplish that goal.

In order to maximize Health IT's benefits and minimize its dangers, I will also be supporting amendments to protect patients' privacy. Patients share the most sensitive of personal information with their health care providers. The loss of that information could be devastating and could lead to serious harm, including financial and emotional harm. Unfortunately, there are actors in the health market place with no regard for the sanctity of personal health information who may misuse or abuse it for profit or worse. Without adequate privacy protections, we also could see patients taking the risky steps of trying to protect themselves by concealing health problems in one way or another, bouncing from doctor to doctor to avoid compiling a comprehensive health record, and avoiding medical tests. In order to ensure we are doing what

we should to keep patients' health information safe, we must set minimum standards of data security and establish a notification system should it falter. Thank you.