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SCHAKOWSKY URGES SUPPORT FOR LEGISLATION TO ALLOW CAR OWNERS TO CHOOSE BEST, CHEAPEST REPAIR SHOPS

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, ranking member on the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, during a hearing in the Subcommittee today expressed her support for H.R. 2048, the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act, which would allow consumers to choose the best and most affordable automobile repair shops.

Schakowsky's opening statement is below:

I believe this bill addresses the current problems independent repair shops run into when they cannot access the technical information they need to work on cars. This bill would also restore consumers' right to choose where they want to take their business.

We have made a number of advances in car design and maintenance through the years. Although we have a way to go, cars are safer and more environmentally sound. However, the technological advances have also created some complications for the corner garage and consumers.

Having car problems is stressful. Simple repairs are turning out not to be so simple after all. Even getting a diagnosis may prove impossible and many have found that they cannot take their cars to the mechanics they trust and have been using for years merely because those mechanics can't get the service information they need - or they can't get it in a timely fashion. Highly skilled mechanics are being forced to send their business to dealers because the auto manufacturers have the diagnosis and repair information on lockdown.

According to AAA, consumers spend almost \$200 billion annually to repair and maintain the 200 million cars on the road. Seventy percent of consumers take their cars to independent repair shops once their warranty expires. If we do not do something to ensure that the diagnosis and repair information sharing goes more smoothly than it has been, then we are severely limiting consumers' choice and undermining small businesses who already have the deck stacked against them.

I believe it is important to protect the trade secrets and intellectual property of auto manufacturers. The motor vehicle industry is the largest manufacturer in the country and their innovations have helped fuel the economy. However, I believe that information necessary to diagnose, service, and repair vehicles sold in the United States should be disclosed to car owners, repair shops, and the Federal Trade Commission. I believe a balance between protecting the rights of manufactures and the rights of the consumer can be found and that H.R.

2048 is on the right track toward striking that balance.

The reason I decided to cosponsor H.R. 2048 is because a couple of years ago, I met over coffee with a number of small repair shop owners in my district. Those shop owners and mechanics, shared their stories about how their business is being driven straight to the dealership because of roadblock after roadblock being thrown up by the auto industry. Even though their shops are more convenient to use and cheaper, they are losing customers.

While I was glad to hear that the stakeholders in H.R. 2048 tried to work out an agreement, it is my understanding that an impasse was reached and that is why we are here today. As is the case in many of these types of battles, consumers are the ones who pay for industry disputes. Again, this is ultimately about the consumers for me. Since the industries involved cannot work out a solution, then I support moving H.R. 2048 through the committee. We need to ensure that the information provided to the car owners and independent repair shops is easily accessible, accurate, timely, and not priced out of reach.