

FEBRUARY 17, 2005

SCHAKOWSKY'S STATEMENT ON FY'06 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BUDGET

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) delivered the following statement during a hearing of the Energy and Commerce Committee where the Health and Human Services Secretary testified about the Bush Administration's FY'06 budget:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you for being here today, Secretary Leavitt.

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We will not have adequate time today to fully discuss all of the many health care concerns presented by the President's budget, from a de-emphasis on health prevention to the failure to rein in prescription drug costs, from cuts in nurse training to cuts that jeopardize state terrorism response planning.

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At the top of my worries about this budget are the proposed cuts to Medicaid.□ At a time when over 45 million Americans - including 9 million children - are uninsured for the entire year, Medicaid has been a life raft.□ It is cost-effective:□ the per capita increases in Medicaid are less than half of those in the private sector.□ It is a major source of long-term care.□ There is a crisis in health care in America - and Medicaid is providing a solution, picking up the pieces as the private market's ability to provide affordable, comprehensive coverage is eroding.

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When the need is so great, why is the Bush Administration proposing a \$60 billion in Medicaid cuts?□□ I am particularly disturbed by your statements that our only real commitment is to "mandatory populations."□ Optional beneficiaries are not "extras" - they are children and pregnant women and persons with disabilities struggling to live on poverty or near-poverty incomes.□ And, they are half of all senior citizens receiving Medicaid.□ How do we tell families already struggling to make ends meet that they will have to find a way to pay for more of their children's medical care or their grandmothers' nursing home care?□ How do we explain to them that there is no room in this budget for their family but there is room for new tax cuts for the wealthiest families in America?□□□

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Mr. Secretary, I believe this is a dangerous budget that will put the security of millions of American families in jeopardy and, by jeopardizing the health of our people, weaken our economic well-being.□ I hope this Committee will reject Medicaid cuts and focus on the

real crisis: the lack of affordable, comprehensive and quality health care for all.