

NOVEMBER 20, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY INTRODUCES BILL
TO HELP PARENTS FACING**

SERIOUS BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today introduced the Business Links Act of 2003, legislation to provide needed resources to parents who are facing serious barriers to employment.

Below is Schakowsky's Congressional Record statement:

HELP PARENTS GET REAL JOBS, REAL WAGES, AND REAL SUCCESS

Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing a bill, the Business Links Act of 2003, that would provide needed resources to parents facing serious barriers to employment. The bill would provide grants for transitional jobs programs in order to support state efforts to help TANF recipients find work. Transitional jobs can provide the right combination of support, work, and vocational training and have the potential to turn many job seekers into permanent wage earners.

I would like to thank my colleagues who have joined me as original cosponsors on this bill. I would also like to commend Senator Jeff Bingaman who has already introduced companion legislation, S. 786, in the Senate.

This legislation would replace the TANF bonus grants currently provided to states and instead provide \$200 million for each of fiscal years 2005 through 2009 for grants to be awarded to nonprofit organizations, local workforce investment boards, states, localities, and Indian tribes. The grant funds could be used either to promote business links by improving employee wages and job skills in partnership with employers or to provide fully subsidized wage-paying jobs to individuals who have been unemployed because of limited skills or other barriers. The legislation also includes worker protection provisions that, among other things, prohibit transitional job participants from displacing or replacing existing workers or positions and provide participants the same worker protections that all other workers receive. Parents who are currently receiving or have recently received Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), parents who are at risk of needing TANF, individuals with disabilities, and unemployed, noncustodial parents who are having difficulty meeting their child support obligations would be eligible to participate in transitional jobs programs.

Transitional jobs programs would provide intensive case management and access to needed support services such as vocational skills training, basic education, job placement services, and child care to all participants. Transitional jobs programs, which are aimed at helping those who have limited English proficiency and others barriers to

employment, can be particularly effective for the hardest to serve welfare recipients. Program participants must work 30 to 40 hours a week, unless they have a child under the age of six, and participation is time limited to between six and 24 months. The goal of transitional jobs programs is to prepare and help participants find unsubsidized, permanent jobs. Because of the individual attention given to each transitional job holder, various programs across the country have proven very successful in achieving that goal. From January 2000 to July 2001, a Chicago program known as Transitional Community Service Jobs placed over 75% of its participants in unsubsidized jobs, more than one-third of which paid over \$8.00 an hour.

Many cities and communities across the country have implemented transitional jobs programs because they understand the importance of helping those facing serious barriers to employment, and they recognize the long-term benefits of investing in a future workforce that is well-trained and able to contribute to the economy. However, because the Welfare-to-Work funds that help support transitional jobs programs are nearly exhausted and because of tight state budgets, many of those successful programs are at risk. This bill would provide a more stable funding source to allow many of these programs to survive, enable the development of new programs, and require a rigorous evaluation of funded programs

I am proud that this bill would help those who are having a difficult time supporting their children by providing them with resources and skills that will help them immediately, as well as sustain them in the future. I urge my colleagues to join me in cosponsoring the Business Links Act of 2003.