

FEBRUARY 13, 2002

**SCHAKOWSKY ANNOUNCES BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO HELP WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLEEING THE TERROR OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ABUSE**

**CALLS ON HUD SECRETARY MARTINEZ TO ENDORSE BILL & FUND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Declaring that women and children cannot truly escape the cycle of abuse until they have a stable and sustainable home base as they begin the road to self sufficiency, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) announced the introduction of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Victims' Housing Act. During a hearing today of the Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee, Schakowsky called on Housing and Urban Development Secretary Mel Martinez to endorse the bill and support families and children fleeing domestic abuse. She added that the Bush HUD budget is not only woefully inadequate in terms of transitional housing assistance, it fails to aggressively confront the nation's affordable housing crisis.

"No one should have to suffer abuse. It is unacceptable that innocent women and children have no choice but to continue to face the violence at home because they have no place to go. With more than 100 supporters, I hope to work with the rest of my colleagues to pass this legislation. This is a critical bill for women who have left situations of domestic violence and are learning new job skills, participating in educational programs, working full-time jobs, or searching for adequate child care in order to gain self-sufficiency," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky pointed to statistics which show that 50 percent of all homeless women and children are fleeing domestic violence, that emergency shelters are unable to meet 32 percent of the requests for shelter by homeless families, and that 88 percent of cities have to turn away homeless families because of inadequate resources.

"Our mission is to end violence against women. As we reach for that goal, however, we must expand the safety network so that women and children can escape the abuse and move on with their lives. We are sparing no expense to attack terror around the world, we must also use every resource to attack the terror of domestic violence right here at home," Schakowsky said.

The bipartisan legislation, cosponsored by more than 100 members of Congress, would authorize \$50 million for transitional housing resources and services that provide a continuum between emergency shelter and independent living. Under this legislation, community-based housing organizations would apply to receive funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in order to assist victims of domestic violence, stalking, or adult or child sexual assault. Groups would use the funds to

**provide temporary and transitional housing or financial assistance for rent, security deposit, and first month's rent.**

**Juley Fulcher, Public Policy Director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, said, "At the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, we are reminded daily of the desperate need for transitional housing for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Emergency shelter is critical but not enough to rebuild a life. Transitional housing can make the difference between staying in an abusive situation and living free from violence."**

**JoAnn Kane, President of the McAuley Institute, said, "McAuley Institute and our community-based partners heartily endorse Representative Schakowsky's strategy to link housing and safety for the survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Representative Jan Schakowsky and the co-sponsors of the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Victims' Housing Assistance Act have taken an important step to assist survivors achieve economic and social independence while concurrently addressing the immediate need of an affordable place to live. McAuley commits to work vigorously with its partners nationwide to achieve passage of this legislation."**

**Lynn Rosenthal, Executive Director, National Network to End Domestic Violence, said, "Lack of safe and affordable housing often keeps battered women trapped in abusive and dangerous relationships. This bill helps victims move towards safety and self-sufficiency, and Congress should make its passage a priority this year."**

**Last year, Schakowsky introduced similar legislation. Portions of her bill were included in the Violence Against Women Act of 2000. As a result, Congress approved \$25 million in transitional housing assistance. Unfortunately, that money was never provided.**