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**SCHAKOWSKY AND CHICAGO PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
CALL FOR MAJOR FEDERAL
INVESTMENT IN LOCAL HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

CHICAGO, IL -U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today warned that now more than ever the federal government must make a serious investment in the public health infrastructure. She joined representatives from Chicago's Public Health Department and Dr. Quentin Young, former President of the American Public Health Association, during a news conference at the Uptown Neighborhood Health Center to announce the Bioterrorism Protection Act (BioPAct) of 2001. The legislation, to be introduced this week, would provide \$7 billion to respond to growing and urgent health needs and security threats. Of that amount, \$3.5 billion would be used for public health infrastructure.

"Our public health and medical systems are already operating on a thin margin. The flu season alone can create serious challenges. Now we must be able to respond to ongoing health care needs and be prepared to handle chemical accidents, truck bombs, planes used as missiles, or outbreaks of anthrax and biological diseases. And we must be able to respond in all parts of the country at all times," Schakowsky said, who was appointed by Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt to the Homeland Security Task Force. Members of the Task Force drafted BioPAct.

Schakowsky added that following the terrorist and anthrax attacks on the United States, Congress and the President have a responsibility to ensure that local governments, who are first responders in the fight against bioterrorism and health threats, are equipped and ready to meet serious health challenges.

"In Chicago and across the country, we have excellent and committed public health and medical personnel who are doing their best to meet expected and unexpected needs. But we are dangerously unprepared to meet the potential challenges ahead," Schakowsky said.

"Many local health departments and community health providers are greatly underfunded, face critical shortages, and do not have internet capacity or even fax machines, meaning that they cannot be informed of potential emergencies or given response instructions on a timely basis. Yet, local health agencies are expected to be first on the scene and first in line to deal with major emergencies" Schakowsky added.

Schakowsky also pointed to a growing critical shortage of nurses and other medical professionals, many medical personnel who are not adequately trained in detection and response to outbreaks of biological diseases, and laboratories that lack adequate numbers of trained epidemiologists.

A longtime advocate of public health and affordable health care, Schakowsky called on Congress and the President to immediately pass BioPAct so that our nation's serious public health concerns can be addressed. The bill would provide \$7 billion to respond to the health and security crisis. Of that amount, \$3.5 billion would be dedicated to public health infrastructure and response to bioterrorism:

1. \$1.4 billion to increase national stockpile of anthrax antibiotics; to acquire additional smallpox vaccines; to develop new medicines and vaccines; to train healthcare professionals; and to streamline the FDA approval process.
2. \$1 billion to provide training and education to first responders and medical personnel, and to improve community emergency response by expanding hospital and community centers capacity.
3. \$600 million in grants to local authorities to develop emergency response plans and to improve intergovernmental coordination and response.
4. \$500 million to upgrade or build local communications systems and to ensure that local systems are hooked up to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The funds would also be used to train health professionals in detection; to upgrade laboratories; to ensure 24-hour access to public health personnel; and to expand CDC capabilities.

"We must act now to revitalize our public health system. We cannot guarantee public health and safety with half-way measures and we cannot do it on the cheap. President Bush's proposal to provide \$175 million for state and local public health will not do the job - and I hope that he will be convinced to provide the funding that local health officials say is needed to rebuild public health," Schakowsky said.

"We must pass the Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2001 now so that we can begin that work immediately. It is likely that the \$3.5 billion will wind up being a downpayment on needed improvements, but it is a downpayment that we cannot afford to delay. I will do everything possible to make sure that, before Congress adjourns, we give local and state public health officials the resources that they need to protect us," Schakowsky concluded.