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SCHAKOWSKY URGES FUNDING FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN FLEEING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today urged a key House subcommittee to fund transitional housing needs for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Last Congress, Schakowsky introduced the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Victims' Housing Act to ensure adequate emergency shelters for women and children fleeing domestic abuse, and was included in the Violence Against Women Act of 2000.

Below is Schakowsky's statement before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

"I would like to thank Chairman Regula, Congressman Obey and members of the Subcommittee for holding this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to address the need for transitional housing for women and children fleeing situations of domestic violence. Your interest and commitment to exploring the issues and problems facing women is important and greatly appreciated.

"I urge the Subcommittee to appropriate \$25 million to the Department of Health and Human Services for transitional housing to individuals who are fleeing situations of domestic abuse. Transitional housing assistance was authorized in the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, which passed with overwhelming support. The Department of Justice identifies 960,000 women, annually, who report having been abused by their husband or boyfriend. However, this number is significantly higher because of difficulty in reporting. According to the first comprehensive national health survey of American women conducted by the Commonwealth Fund, 3.9 million American women actually experience abuse by an intimate partner each year.

"Every year, hundreds of these women flee abusive situations with few financial resources. When a woman leaves an abusive relationship, she often has no where to go. Lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for assisted housing mean that many women and their children are forced to choose between abuse at home or the streets. Moreover, shelters are frequently filled to capacity and must turn away battered women and their children. The connection between domestic violence and housing is overwhelming. A Ford Foundation study found that 50% of homeless women and children were fleeing abuse.

"Housing can prevent domestic violence and mitigate its effects. Shelters provide immediate safety to battered women and their children and help women gain control over their lives and get on their feet. A stable, sustainable home base is crucial for women

who have left situations of domestic violence. While dealing with the trauma of abuse, they are also learning new job skills, participating in educational programs, working full time jobs, or searching for adequate child care in order to gain self-sufficiency.

Transitional housing resources and services provide a continuum between emergency shelter and independent living.

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"According to estimates by the McAuley Institute, \$25 million in funding for transitional housing would provide assistance to at least 2,700 families. We must be supportive of individuals who are escaping violence and seeking to better their lives."

"In closing, let me reiterate my appreciation to the Subcommittee and restate my strong support for providing safe, transitional housing assistance to women and children fleeing domestic violence."