

WASHINGTON D.C. (August 11, 2011) –Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) released the following statement in recognition of Community Health Center Week. Community health centers create jobs, provide cost-effective preventative care and serve as drivers of economic activity in the communities in which they are located :

“Community Health Center Week is a time to recognize the increasingly important role community health centers play in providing access to preventative and primary care to 23 million patients in underserved areas,” said **Rep. Jan Schakowsky**. “Community health centers provide critical services to the constituents in my district and throughout the country – including people who have no other source of care and who are uninsured. Without the community health center presence, many Illinoisans would have limited or no access to primary care. Delays in care result in preventable and costly health problems, harming individuals and taxpayers.

“The 14 health centers in my district deliver care in a culturally sensitive, compassionate and professional manner,” **said Schakowsky**. “They have improved the health of patients and responded to the health and education needs of the communities they serve. One clear sign of their success is that so many communities want to have their own community health center – and we need to make sure that we provide the resources necessary to create new centers while allowing existing ones to continue providing great care. Proposed cuts to Medicaid and reductions in funding to build and maintain community health centers are bad policies that must be rejected.

Community health centers specialize in providing cost-effective, high-quality primary and preventive health care that generate \$24 billion in savings to the health care system annually and deliver care at a total cost of just \$1.64 per patient per day. In Illinois, there are 43 Federally Qualified Health Centers with more than 400 clinic sites serving over 1.2 million patients statewide. Health centers serve as the health care home for one in seven Medicaid beneficiaries, while providing care at a cost of only 1% of total Medicaid spending. Medicaid is recognized as critical in providing health services to low-income populations, including health shortage areas served by community health centers such as Beloved Community Wellness Center where 64% of their service area has incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level, as well as at Alivio Medical Center where 60% of the 25,000 patients served are Medicaid recipients.

On June 9th, Rep. Schakowsky held a hearing in Chicago on Medicaid and featured testimony

from Carmen Velásquez, executive director of Alivio Medical Center and Margie Johnson, executive director of Beloved Community Family Wellness Center. In her testimony, Ms. Velásquez argued that federal Medicaid cuts would increase health care costs by reducing access to more cost-effective settings, preventive services and early intervention:

“Instead of being patients of Alivio or another community health center, Alivio patients will go to the emergency rooms of a local hospital; not a cost-effective situation for anybody,” said Ms. Velasquez. “Preventive services help to contain the cost of treating chronic diseases. If services are reduced, the cost of healthcare will continue to rise.”

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