

**Washington, DC** (April 27, 2012) - Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) released the following statement on House passage of HR 4628 – legislation that calls for freezing the student loan rate on July 1 in exchange for an offset that undermines health care for women and children :

“House Republicans have demonstrated their complete disregard and contempt for women’s health and the plight of students by forcing a choice between the elimination of funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund or relief for students who are saddled with student loan debt.

That is a choice that we shouldn’t and don’t have make. It is cruel and destructive, it is anti-family, it is not smart economically, and it is completely unnecessary.

As a mother and a grandmother, I simply cannot understand why Congressional Republicans continue their assault on women’s health. I cannot understand why they prefer to reduce access to cancer screenings and immunizations rather than asking Big Oil to give up their subsidies. I cannot understand why they are trying to force us to choose between keeping moms healthy or sending their children to college. If we want to revitalize our economy and unburden Americans who are saddled with student loan debt, we must enact policies that help to cut that debt. Democrats have been demanding action on student loans for months – and finally, Republicans have agreed to do something.

But at what cost? By putting the health of women and children at risk. The Prevention and Public Health Fund supports proven prevention activities like breast and cervical cancer screenings. It helps provide immunizations for children. It will save lives and keep women well. Republicans are telling us that we have to choose between protecting women’s and children’s health or letting student loan rates double.

Republicans are trying to label the Prevention Fund as a slush fund. Americans know that mammograms and Pap smears are not “slush” – they are basic, routine – and often life-saving – services for women. Prevention is fundamental. It is the key to reducing health care costs and creating a long-term path to a healthier and economically sound America. Cutting prevention programs like breast and cervical cancer screening now will only lead to increased health costs down the road. In fact, the data proves that we should be increasing our investment in early

detection through screening and working to increase awareness about these diseases. The National Health Interview Survey from 2010 found that women are getting screened for breast and cervical cancers at rates below national standards.

The breast cancer screening rate was 72% in 2010, below the federal health target of 81%. The cervical cancer screening rates were 83%, below the 93% goal. The screening rates for both cancers were significantly lower among Asian and Hispanic and women, as well as those without health insurance or no usual source of health care. In the United States in 2012, it is estimated that there will be 226,870 new cases of invasive breast cancer, and nearly 40,000 women will die from the disease; an estimated 12,000 women will be diagnosed with cervical cancer, and over 4,000 women will die from cervical cancer.

Earlier this week, Republicans on the Energy and Commerce Committee approved over \$97 billion in cuts to public health programs to insulate the Department of Defense from spending cuts triggered by the failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. Among the suggested cuts was the complete elimination of funding for the Prevention and Public Health Fund. I offered an amendment to preserve support under the Fund for breast and cervical cancer screening programs and other women's health preventive services. My amendment was defeated along party lines.

Republicans could ask millionaires and billionaires, oil and gas companies making record profits, and corporations that shift jobs and profits overseas to help offset the cost of reducing student loan interest rates. Instead, they have decided to continue with their repeated war on women's health by eliminating funding for the public health programs that benefit women – to reduce the costs for their sons and daughters to attend college.”

###