

SEPTEMBER 25, 2000

SCHAKOWSKY APPLAUDS \$1.2 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT TO HELP ILLINOIS DEVELOP UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE PLAN

SCHAKOWSKY ORGANIZED LETTER IN JULY URGING APPROVAL OF GRANT

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today applauded a \$1.2 million federal grant to help Illinois develop a plan to provide health care coverage to the uninsured.

"As the cost of health care increases and more people lose their coverage, we must find ways to deliver high quality health care to those who need it. That's why I am very pleased that Illinois has been awarded this grant. It will help the state design effective solutions to our health care needs," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky added, "This is a valuable opportunity to review the health care system in Illinois and improve access to all residents. I believe the best way to meet the needs of the uninsured is to make them part of a system that guarantees access to quality universal healthcare."

Schakowsky has been working to promote Illinois' application and had organized a letter with other members of the delegation urging HHS to grant Illinois the funds. In the letter sent to HHS Secretary Donna Shalala in July, Schakowsky and her colleagues promoted the application by pointing to Illinois' existing healthcare infrastructure as an important guide "to draw upon in developing a comprehensive health plan." They added, "The Illinois application lays out a thoughtful approach that, if funded, would provide the additional research and policy analysis framework necessary to develop an effective solution."

The grant is awarded under the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) new State Planning Grants program. The state of Illinois will use the funds to gather data on the uninsured to determine the most effective methods to provide them with high-quality, affordable health insurance similar to plans that cover government employees or other benchmark plans. The ten other states that have been awarded similar grants are Arkansas, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Oregon, Vermont and Wisconsin. The states are required to submit to the Secretary by September 30, 2001 a comprehensive report detailing their plans to expand coverage and ensure access to the uninsured.