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SCHAKOWSKY INTRODUCES BILL TO INCREASE PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE FOR RESIDENTS OF NURSING HOMES AND LONG TERM FACILITIES ON MEDICAID

HOSTS FORUM WITH RESIDENTS OF SOMERSET PLACE AFTER RECEIVING THEIR PETITION WITH MORE THAN 240 SIGNATURES CALLING FOR AN INCREASE

CHICAGO, IL - Saying that seniors in nursing homes and persons with mental disabilities in residential facilities deserve more than a dollar a day, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) introduced legislation to increase the Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) from \$30 to \$50 a month. The money is used by those individuals to buy and pay for the most basic of personal items, such as clothing, reading materials, bus fare, stamps, haircuts, telephone calls, or snacks.

"It's been twelve years since the federal government mandated an increase in the Personal Needs Allowance to \$30. That's too long and, in today's dollars, that amount is clearly too low. By raising the allowance, we have an opportunity to enrich the quality of life and to lift the spirits of those in real need," Schakowsky said.

Schakowsky introduced legislation to increase the PNA after receiving a petition from constituents in her district. The petition drive was organized by Michael Ahl, President of Somerset Place Resident Council and signed by more than 240 residents. Somerset Place is a residential home for people with mental disabilities that serves 400 individuals. Schakowsky met today with residents of the facility to discuss their concerns and her bill, answer their questions, and hear their stories.

"The residents of Somerset Place told me how they struggle every day just to buy a pair of shoes or to pay for bus fare. I am committed to finding solutions and will begin by working to increase the Personal Needs Allowance," Schakowsky said.

The federal minimum amount for personal needs allowances is \$30 a month. It represents how much Medicaid-eligible residents are allowed to keep out of their Social Security checks and other sources of income. The rest of their income is used to help pay for nursing home and residential care. Schakowsky's bill, H.R. 5087, would increase the federal minimum by 60% to \$50 a month. Some states permit facility residents to retain more in personal income. However, Illinois only allows the federal minimum of \$30 a month.

United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) Associations, the nation's largest health charity, has endorsed Schakowsky's bill. In a letter to Schakowsky, UCP wrote, "Increasing Medicaid's personal needs allowance to keep pace with inflation is important to maintain these residents' personal dignity."