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**SCHAKOWSKY, WATERS AND OTHERS INTRODUCE
BILL TO COMBAT WORLDWIDE HIV/AIDS CRISIS**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today joined Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA) and others in introducing legislation to combat the worldwide HIV/AIDS crisis. The Affordable HIV/AIDS Medicines for Poor Countries Act would prohibit the United States government from using trade policy and other measures to block the efforts of developing nations to fight HIV/AIDS.

"As the world's richest nation, it is a moral imperative for us to do all we possibly can to address the AIDS pandemic in which millions of people are dying in sub Saharan Africa and throughout the globe. It is morally reprehensible for the United States or any other nation to willfully stand in the way of countries trying to save its people from this pandemic. That is why we cannot allow our government, in concert with the pharmaceutical companies, to keep affordable AIDS drugs away from those who need it. This is not the time to protect drug company profits," Schakowsky said.

The Affordable HIV/AIDS Medicines for Poor Countries Act would make it illegal for the U.S. government to use the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to prevent any developing country from importing drugs from other countries or producing generic versions on their own. It would also prohibit any agency of the U.S. government from using federal funds to seek to revoke any law or policy of a developing country that promotes access to HIV/AIDS medicines. Furthermore, this bill would require the U.S. to urge the World Trade Organization (WTO) to exempt developing countries from the application of provisions of the TRIPS agreement that restrict their ability to make HIV/AIDS medicines available to their populations at affordable prices.

TRIPS is one of the international agreements enforced by the WTO. The TRIPS agreement allows corporations to benefit from patents over medicines. Corporations use their patents to force developing countries to pay for the use of the medicines. As a result of the TRIPS agreement, many people in developing countries have been denied life-saving medicines because they cannot afford to pay the exorbitant prices, which range from \$4,000 to \$20,000 a year. The GNP per capita in sub-Saharan Africa is \$503 per year.

"Seventy percent of those infected with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa, but the epicenter of this crisis is creeping towards Asia. If we don't change our trade policies that currently protect pharmaceutical company profits, millions more young boys and girls will grow up without parents. It's time for the United States to set an example for the rest of the world, do what is morally right, and attack this crisis to the real extent that we are capable," Schakowsky added.

After Schakowsky and others criticized U.S. policies of putting politics and profits ahead of access to affordable HIV/AIDS drugs for nations like South Africa, the President issued an Executive Order changing U.S. trade policies regarding HIV/AIDS drugs in sub-Saharan Africa. However, Schakowsky believes that more must be done in order to ensure that developing countries are free to pursue access to affordable HIV/AIDS drugs.

Schakowsky has taken a lead role in Congress on this issue and was successful in adding an amendment to the World Bank AIDS Marshall Plan Trust Fund Act. Her amendment expands the objectives of the trust fund to include affordable HIV/AIDS prevention, education, treatment and affordable drugs. In addition, Schakowsky joined the Vice President this year at an unprecedented meeting of the United Nations Security Council on HIV/AIDS. This was the first time that the Security Council considered a health epidemic as a worldwide security threat.