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REPRESENTATIVES SCHAKOWSKY, BLAGOJEVICH & RUSH ANNOUNCE EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN FEDERAL NURSING HOME STANDARDS

RELEASE REPORT ON CHICAGO AREA NURSING HOME ABUSES

CHICAGO, IL - At a news conference to release a report on Chicago area nursing homes abuses, U.S. Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Bobby Rush (D-IL), and Rod Blagojevich (D-IL) today announced plans to introduce legislation to strengthen federal nursing home standards. A daughter, whose mother suffered from severe bedsores while at a nursing home and who died last month, also participated at today's event.

The report found that many seniors in Chicago area nursing homes are not receiving quality medical and personal care. As a result, they suffer from bedsores, malnutrition, and a host of other disturbing and preventable ailments. Specifically, one out of every seven nursing homes in the Chicago metropolitan area had a violation that caused actual harm to residents or placed them at risk of death or serious injury.

"These human rights abuses are taking place right here at home. Senior citizens should not have to spend another day enduring this inhumane mistreatment. Our parents and grandparents deserve nothing less than quality nursing home care," Schakowsky said.

"What we need is the strongest and boldest federal protections that will help put an end to the misery. If we do not take action today, our seniors will continue to be robbed of their golden years," Schakowsky added.

A major contributor to the violations that take place in nursing homes is inadequate staffing. The report cited an example of a nursing home where a single nurse aide was left to care for an entire floor of 68 residents in the middle of the afternoon. As a result of staff shortages, residents with pressure sores were left in the same position and in soiled diapers for hours. That is why Schakowsky and her colleagues will introduce the Quality Care for Nursing Home Patients Act. The bill would guarantee adequate staffing ratios at nursing homes receiving Medicare or Medicaid funding.

"Serious problems do exist in many nursing homes throughout our country. That is why we must ensure that we not only have adequately trained staff, but we have enough properly trained staff," Schakowsky said. Leading academics on health care, advocates for quality nursing home care, and consumer groups such as the National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform and the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare have endorsed minimum staffing standards.

The bill would require nursing homes to have a full-time Registered Nurse (RN) on duty at all times. It would also require nursing homes to meet direct care staffing standards

of having a licensed or certified health professional for every 5 residents during the day, every 10 residents in the evening, and every 15 residents at night. Additionally, the bill would require at least one licensed nurse for every 15 residents during the day, every 20 residents in the evening and every 30 residents at night. Nursing homes would be reimbursed by the Health Care Financing Administration (HFCA) for any additional costs of meeting those standards.

Schakowsky also added that she intends to work with the Department of Health and Human Services and state authorities to make sure that nursing home inspectors are properly trained and that there is strong and consistent enforcement.

The report found that 15% of the 290 nursing homes in the Chicago area -- more than one out of every seven -- had violations that caused actual harm to residents or placed them at risk of death or serious injury. These homes are estimated to receive $75 million in federal and state funds each year. Only 21% of the nursing homes in Chicago were in full or substantial compliance with federal standards during their most recent annual inspection. The remaining nursing homes, or 229, averaged 5.5 violations.

Most Severe Violation Cited by Inspectors	Number of Homes	Percent of Homes	Number of Residents
Complete Compliance (No Violations)	31	11%	2,593
Substantial Compliance (Risk of Minimal Harm)	30	10%	3,546
Potential for More than Minimal Harm	186	64%	24,969
Actual Harm to Residents	42	14%	6,571
Actual or Potential Death/Serious Injury	1	0.3%	209

The report was prepared at the request of the members by the Government Reform Committee's minority staff. The staff analyzed data from the Online Survey, Certification, and Reporting database maintained by the Department of Health and Human Services. They also examined actual state inspection reports from a sample of nursing homes in the Chicago metropolitan area. The report should be considered a snapshot of overall conditions in Chicago nursing homes, not an analysis of current conditions in any specific home.