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SCHAKOWSKY PRAISES ILLINOIS HOUSE FOR PASSING PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT FOR ILLINOIS SENIORS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today hailed the passage of a landmark prescription drug bill by the Illinois House that would guarantee lower prices for millions of Illinois seniors and persons with disabilities. The bill passed the Illinois House by a vote of 63 to 37. The author of the bill in the Illinois House is Jack Franks (D-Woodstock). The bill was endorsed by the AFL-CIO, AARP, Citizen Action of Illinois, the Illinois Council of Senior Citizens and the Illinois Nurses Association. The bill is now referred to the Illinois Senate.

Under the bill, senior citizens or persons with disabilities can pay \$25 to purchase a prescription card that will give them the same access to discounted drugs available to preferred customers, like large HMOs. Estimates are that this could provide savings of an average of 52% compared to retail prices that individuals now pay.

"This is a landmark legislative victory for seniors in Illinois. Now, we must translate this victory to the national stage and pass federal legislation that guarantees lower prescription drugs for all seniors and persons with disabilities throughout the nation," Schakowsky said.

"Seniors are in danger. Because of the greed of the pharmaceutical companies and their lobbyists' deep pockets, millions are forced to choose between taking their medication or paying the rent. This is immoral. The Illinois House today acted to bring this to an end. Now, the U.S. Senate and Congress must follow suit." she added.

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Schakowsky is a cosponsor of H.R. 664, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act. The bill would allow pharmacies to purchase drugs for Medicare beneficiaries at the same low prices available to the federal government and other favored customers, including HMOs and insurance companies.□□

Schakowsky had released three reports last year that found that pharmaceutical companies are gouging seniors. A report found that drug manufacturers on average charge more than twice as much when drugs are intended for human use than for animal use. Another report concluded that uninsured seniors living in the Chicago area pay 114% more for their medications as compared to HMOs and insurance companies. Finally, a report found that seniors living in the Chicago area pay 80% more for the same drugs sold in Mexico and Canada.