

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

For immediate release: February 11, 2009

Contact:
Stabenow Press Office: 202-224-1437
Peter Karafotas, Schakowsky, 202-226-6898

Senator Stabenow, Congresswoman Schakowsky Introduce Congressional Resolution to Make Women's Concerns Central to National Health Reform Debate

(Washington, D.C.) -- U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), House Democratic Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), and other Congressional leaders introduced a resolution today that outlines a new framework for women's health and will make women's needs a key part of the national health reform debate. They were joined at a Capitol Hill press conference by Josef Reum, Dean of The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services; Dr. Kenneth L. Knoller, Gynecologist-In-Chief of Tufts Medical Center from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E), executive director of the American Public Health Association; experts from Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health; and other leading health care and women's organizations.

"Women are the gatekeepers of their families' health. If we are serious about keeping children and families healthy, we must focus more attention on keeping women healthy," said Senator Stabenow. "Women must have affordable health care that they can rely on through their life transitions, including starting a family, working part-time or full-time, divorce, or caring for a sick or elderly parent."

"Any debate on national healthcare reform must address the healthcare needs of women who are often the primary caregivers and decision makers for their families," said Representative Schakowsky. "We know that women face exceptional challenges and have a very personal stake in fixing our broken health care system- they know we need to act now. The current economic crisis is not an excuse for delay; it is a persuasive argument for an immediate response. As the Democratic Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus, I look forward to working with the healthcare community, my colleagues in Congress and the Obama Administration to win a solution that guarantees affordable, quality and comprehensive care for women and their families."

At the event, the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health released a report that underscores the need for the Congressional resolution. The report,

"Women's Health and Health Care Reform: The Key Role of Comprehensive Reproductive Care," makes a scientific, data-driven case that reproductive health is a key determinant of women's overall health and, as a result, the treatments and services that promote reproductive health must be part of any national health plan. Thirty-eight deans of schools of public health have endorsed the policy recommendations in the report, which all point to a new framework for addressing women's health.

Dr. Wendy Chavkin, a lead author of the report, said, "we want to establish a standard of care for American women so that they can attain good health, maintain it during their reproductive years and age well."

"Every day through research, teaching, and service to communities around the nation, and across the world, schools of public health demonstrate with science, extend into evidence, and translate into policy, the centrality of women's health to the future of our nation and the world. Where true reform of the design, delivery, or distribution of health has taken place in the history of our nation those reforms have been led by women," said Josef Reum, Dean of The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services.

"Women's health must be a cornerstone of health care reform. This resolution closely echoes ACOG's Health Care for Women, Health Care for All campaign, and we applaud Senator Stabenow and Representative Schakowsky for their leadership and commitment to our five principles for women's health in health care reform: Health care reform must cover everyone; guarantee benefits; engage employers, individuals and governments; build on the strengths of our private-public financing and delivery system; make coverage affordable; and enhance quality and patient safety," said Kenneth L. Noller, MD, MS, Immediate Past President of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

"As we seek ways to improve health outcomes, reduce disparities and enhance quality of life in our nation, it is essential that our nation reform our health system in a manner that builds upon the strong public health foundation required for success," said Georges C. Benjamin, MD, FACP, FACEP (E), executive director of the American Public Health Association. "Looking at women's health in particular, it is critical that all women have access to comprehensive health services, including preventative care, and that they are supported in making healthy choices throughout the various stages of their lives."

The resolution commits Congress to passing, within 18 months of adopting the resolution, legislation that guarantees health care for women and all individuals and establishes coverage that enables women to attain good health that they can maintain during their reproductive years and throughout their lives. The Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health report is available at <http://www.mailmanschool.org/facultypubs/womenshealthcarereform.pdf>.