

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

Help Prevent HIV/AIDS
Support the Microbicide Development Act

March 2, 2007

Dear Colleague:

On March 8th, International Women's Day, we will re-introduce the *Microbicide Development Act* a bill to help focus, streamline, and speed efforts to develop urgently needed HIV prevention products. We invite you to join us as an original cosponsor of this important public health legislation.

The *Microbicide Development Act* will bolster and coordinate microbicide research and development programs at the NIH, USAID, and CDC. Specifically, this legislation would establish for the first time a clearly defined branch dedicated to microbicide R&D at the NIH and require the development of a strategic plan to expedite research.

What Are Microbicides?

Microbicides are a class of products under development that could be applied topically to prevent the spread of HIV infection. Microbicides may eventually take the form of gels, creams, and films, and be used in cervical caps, pre-loaded diaphragms, or rings. Microbicides may be available in both contraceptive and non-contraceptive formulas.

Why Do We Need to Develop Microbicides?

With nearly 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide and over 4 million new infections in 2006 alone, HIV/AIDS continues to be a global threat. And with nearly half of all adults living with HIV/AIDS in 2006 being female, it is a rapidly increasing public health concern for women. Globally speaking, the numbers are alarming. In sub-Saharan Africa, women accounted for nearly 60% of HIV/AIDS cases. With AIDS being the leading cause of death of African American women aged 25-34, women in the U.S. are also in great need of prevention options such as microbicides. Despite the fact that women have been increasingly devastated by this disease, female-initiated methods of prevention are limited and current prevention options are not enough.

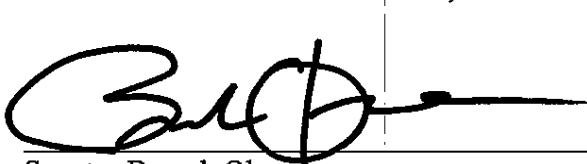
We know that a growing number of women who become infected with HIV have had just one partner – their husband. Marriage is not necessarily effective protection against HIV because women must rely on their male partners to be faithful or to use condoms. Many women, especially in the developing world, are unable to insist on mutual monogamy or negotiate for condom use, particularly in long-term relationships. Furthermore, the contraceptive effects of barrier methods also pose an obstacle for women. Topical microbicides represent a woman-initiated method of prevention that would not require cooperation from a male partner and may even permit conception. Mathematical models predict that even a partially effective microbicide

could prevent 2.5 million infections over three years and that gradual introduction of newer and better microbicides could ultimately save a generation of women. Topical microbicides, therefore, represent a critical element in a comprehensive strategy to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

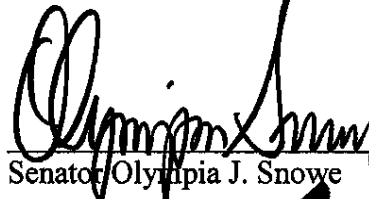
How Does the Microbicide Development Act Foster Microbicide Development?

Advances have been made in the development of microbicides in recent years. By the end of 2006, there were 36 organizations involved in microbicide R&D, with ten microbicide candidates currently in clinical development and over thirty in preclinical development. In fact, many prominent scientists believe that an effective microbicide could be available in the next five to ten years. We cannot let this momentum slow; we must continue to prioritize microbicide research and development. According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, "with leadership, collaborative effort, sufficient financial resources, and product development expertise, a microbicide is within reach."

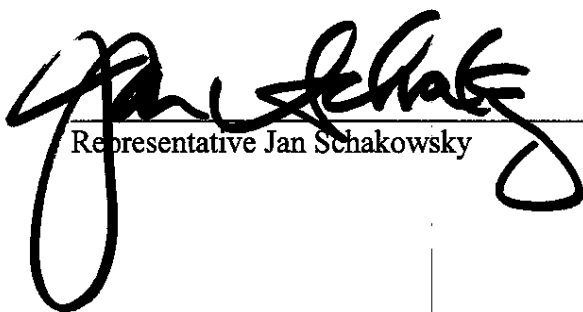
For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Susan Walch with Rep. Schakowsky's office at 5-2111, Marissa Varnadore with Rep. Shays' office at 5-5541, Dora Hughes with Senator Obama's office at 4-2854, or Bill Pewen with Senator Snowe's office at 4-5344.



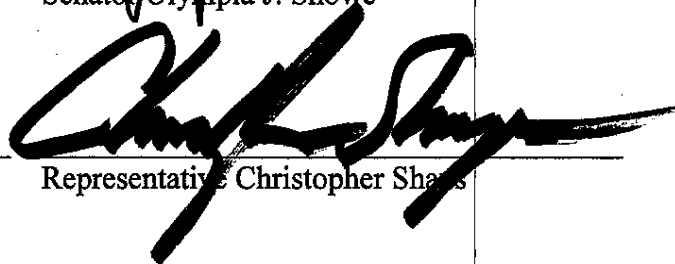
Senator Barack Obama



Senator Olympia J. Snowe



Representative Jan Schakowsky



Representative Christopher Shays