

# Beiser passes legislation to protect nurses, state workers

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**SPRINGFIELD** – In response to the proposed layoffs of nurses in Illinois Department of Corrections facilities, state Rep. Dan Beiser, D-Alton, helped pass legislation that would prevent the department from reducing the number of medical and mental health employees they have.

“Nurses go through years of training and are committed to treating their patients,” Beiser said. “These medical professionals should not be able to be fired from their jobs

just because there is a contract disagreement with the governor. The nurses that are employed by the state of Illinois, regardless of their union or their location, should be treated as the trained experts that they are.

In March, IDOC notified the Illinois Nurses Association that they intended to lay off over 100 nurses across the state and then rehire them or fill the positions through a private subcontractor with a long history of federal and state lawsuits for medical negligence. Beiser's legislation, Senate Bill 19, would prevent IDOC from reducing the number of medical and mental health employees. The bill also prevents the IDOC from entering into a new medical contract to replace the current employees.

"It is fundamentally unfair to tell registered nurses in the Illinois Department of Corrections they are going to be fired, but they can come back to work and do the exact same job for less pay and no pension," said Alice Johnson, Executive Director, Illinois Nurses Association. "These nurses have dedicated their careers to providing patient care in an extremely difficult setting. Their knowledge and loyalty are assets to the department and to the people of Illinois. Smart employers are competing for experienced registered nurses, not laying them off. Ultimately, cutting quality health care staff does not save money, as cuts diminish the quality of care, and that leads to lawsuits against the state."

"If the governor is allowed to move forward with this action and get rid of employees as he picks and chooses, I am concerned about all state employees in our community, whether at the Alton Mental Health Center or other state facilities," Beiser said. "I will continue to stand up for the hard-working men and women who serve our state."