



Durbin, Duckworth Announce Cms Approval Of Illinois' Request To Expand Health Services Amid Covid-19 Pandemic

March 24 2020 11:24 AM

WASHINGTON – Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today announced that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the State of Illinois' Section 1135 Medicaid waiver, enabling the state to expand access to health services and have the flexibility to deliver quality care amid this public health crisis. This news comes on the heels of the [letter](#) the Senators sent to CMS Administrator Seema Verma urging the agency to approve the State of Illinois' 1135 Medicaid waiver.

“Illinois' health care system will face an unprecedented surge in patients in the coming days and weeks, which is why it was essential to deliver the resources our health providers need to serve their communities throughout Illinois. Providing flexibility to bolster our workforce, use innovative care models, and waive administrative requirements helps to put patient health care needs first during the coronavirus crisis. I applaud CMS for swiftly acting on our request,” Durbin said.

“Illinois has been fast-acting in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak, but it's clear that healthcare systems across our state will struggle to handle the expected number of patients who will be infected and need care,” said Duckworth. “I'm glad CMS quickly responded to our call to waive requirements and provide more flexibility for health providers who are continuing to serve our communities during this public health crisis.”

The 1135 Medicaid waiver submitted by the State of Illinois waives certain federal Medicaid, CHIP, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements to ensure patient health care needs can be met during the COVID-19 emergency. Specifically, the Illinois 1135 waiver request bolsters workforce capacity by waiving certain regulations on prescribing and referring practices and certain restrictions on care settings—so health providers can deliver essential care in innovative locations,

such as a drive-thru screening site or by telehealth. The waiver also suspends prior authorization requirements for most services, so patients can access necessary care without delay.

Pursuant to the March 13 national emergency declaration, CMS has the emergency authority to waive certain requirements in Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program under Section 1135 of the Social Security Act.