



Duckworth Speaks with Illinois Nurses Association and Illinois Hospital and Health Association Leaders about COVID-19 Pandemic

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WASHINGTON, D.C.] – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) spoke with the Director of the Illinois Nurses Association (INA), Alice Johnson, and the President & CEO of the Illinois Hospital and Health Association (IHHA), AJ Wilhelmi, to express her appreciation for the tireless efforts of Illinois nurses and other workers on the front lines of this crisis and discuss efforts to ensure the Federal Government provides adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare facilities. INA is the largest nurses' union in Illinois and IHHA represents more than 200 hospitals and nearly 40 health systems across the state.

“I’m thankful for the work of our nurses and healthcare providers who take on greater risks every day to protect each of us from COVID-19,” Duckworth said. “I’m glad I got the opportunity to speak with Director Johnson and President Wilhelmi, and I’ll continue to push this Administration to provide financial support for our hospitals and PPE for workers on the front lines.”

Since the COVID-19 public health crisis began, Senator Duckworth has led with a wide range of actions to support middle-class working Americans and help our nation better respond to the pandemic, [including supporting the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) that’s now law forcing the Trump Administration to refocus its efforts on testing and access to tests. She also [voted in favor of the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#), which makes important progress to help Americans address and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Duckworth was one of the first Senators to [urge](#) the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to immediately establish clear diagnostic testing procedures, capabilities and production capacity to better mitigate the spread of COVID-19. After [calling on the President to swiftly take action](#)

[under the *Defense Production Act \(DPA\)* to boost production of live-saving ventilators](#) and other equipment needed to limit the spread of COVID-19, Duckworth helped [introduce new legislation](#) to require him to do so to help save lives. [She also introduced the *COVID-19 Health Care Worker Protection Act* to help keep frontline healthcare workers safe, cosponsored the *Free COVID-19 Testing Act* to expand access to free tests](#) [helped introduce](#) the comprehensive *COVID-19 RELIEF for Small Businesses Act of 2020* to support small businesses across the country and give them the resources they need to weather this crisis and she helped introduce legislation that [was signed into law](#) to make sure student Veterans and their loved ones receiving benefits through the GI Bill don't lose them as universities move online. Duckworth also [joined her colleagues](#) on the *PAID (Providing Americans Insured Days) Leave Act* to ensure workers can take time off when ill and [helped introduce](#) the *Small Business Debt Relief Act of 2020* to support small businesses affected by the pandemic by relieving certain federal loan payments.

After hundreds of passengers were forced into close quarters for hours to clear federal medical screenings at customs at O'Hare International Airport, Duckworth [joined U.S. Senator Dick Durbin \(D-IL\) in demanding](#) additional federal resources. She [called on Donald Trump to do more to bring back Illinoisans](#) and other Americans stranded abroad as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. She [also called](#) on U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to work together to ensure civilian healthcare workers are well-trained to use military-issued respirator masks and other personal protective equipment that DOD has made available to civilian healthcare providers. [Duckworth spoke out](#) about Republican attempts to deny funding to healthcare providers that receive Medicaid, thereby making it harder for vulnerable groups—including people with disabilities, older Americans and survivors of rape and abuse—to access critical services they rely on, like home care assistance or meal delivery programs. Along with Senator Durbin, [she sent a letter](#) to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) calling on the agency to grant the State of Illinois flexibility to expand access to health services and have the flexibility to deliver quality care amid this public health crisis, [which CMS ultimately granted](#). Duckworth [joined a bipartisan group](#) of Senators urging the Trump Administration expand access to telehealth services to rural communities and she [pressed](#) the CDC for information on a potential shortage of enzymes needed for CDC coronavirus test kits. The Senator is [also seeking information](#) from Secretary of Defense Mark Esper about any proactive steps the Department of Defense is taking to ensure the readiness of National Guard and Reserve units to support local civilian authorities as the pandemic spreads.