



# Durbin Discusses COVID-19 Response With Illinois Hospitals

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today, on a call with more than 20 CEOs of Illinois hospitals and AJ Wilhelmi, President of the Illinois Health & Hospital Association, discussed the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Illinois and how hospitals are fighting the pandemic on the ground. Durbin thanked the hospital representatives for everything their hospitals and health workers have done so far to help Illinois patients and pledged he would continue to push for a direct and immediate infusion of funds for our hospitals, as well as increases in personal protective equipment, testing kit supplies, ventilators, and other medical resources health workers need. Durbin also discussed his bipartisan proposal to help financially vulnerable rural hospitals stay open during the pandemic and his legislative efforts to bolster the health care workforce through the National Health Service Corps.

“The sacrifices being made by health care workers right now are extraordinary. This virus will continue to challenge our health care system in unprecedented ways, and the federal government must be there to assist financially vulnerable hospitals and those in need of more medical supplies. One of my highest priorities is to make sure we are providing direct and immediate assistance to Illinois hospitals across the state so they can keep their doors open and continue to help patients,” Durbin said.

Last week, Durbin and Senator James Lankford (R-OK) urged Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar to ensure rural hospitals have the needed support to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain financial stability to continue serving their communities. Durbin and Lankford highlighted the \$100 billion in new funding appropriated by Congress to health care providers in the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, and emphasized the importance of ensuring rural hospitals can access these funds.

Durbin and Lankford also highlighted their bipartisan *Rural Hospital Closure Relief Act*, and urged Secretary Azar’s support for their legislation. The bill would support

financially vulnerable rural hospitals facing risk of closure by updating Medicare's "Critical Access Hospital" (CAH) designation so more rural hospitals can qualify for this financial lifeline and continue to serve their communities with quality, affordable health care services.