



Duckworth Speaks with Illinois Legislative Leaders to Discuss COVID-19 Response & Racial Disparities

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WASHINGTON, DC – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) spoke with Illinois legislative leaders at the state and local level today about the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial disparities that exist in COVID-19 cases and deaths in Illinois and across the nation. Recent reports showed that Black Chicagoans have made up 64 percent of the total deaths in Chicago despite only comprising only about 30 percent of the city's population. Duckworth spoke with Alderman Jason Ervin (Chicago Black Caucus Chair), Alderman Robert Maldonado (Chicago Hispanic Caucus Chair), State Senator Kim Lightford (Joint Black Caucus Chair) and State Senator Omar Aquino (Hispanic Caucus Co-Chair).

“I had productive discussions with these leaders about the financial resources now available to Illinoisans and the disturbing racial disparities in COVID19 cases and deaths,” Duckworth said. “I’ll continue advocating for the health and safety of communities of color and working with these leaders to make sure we are doing everything we can to help stop the spread of this virus and support hardworking Illinoisans who have been impacted by this pandemic.”

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, refocusing the Trump Administration's efforts on testing and access to tests. She also [voted for the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#), which makes important progress to help Americans address and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. While not perfect, the bipartisan compromise does put workers and their families—not corporations—first by putting cash directly in the pockets of consumers, greatly expanding emergency unemployment insurance and providing immediate relief for small businesses. The CARES Act also includes transparent

oversight of bailed-out corporations and additional resources for state and local governments—as well as our hospitals and health centers—that are all on the front lines of this crisis.

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 the 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 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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (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. Duckworth also joined the Illinois Democratic Congressional delegation in [sending](#) a letter to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar expressing strong concerns regarding the racial disparities that exist in COVID-19 cases and deaths in Illinois and across the nation.