



Duckworth Hosts Community Health Centers Conference Call on COVID-19 Challenges

May 13 2020 9:55 AM

WASHINGTON, D.C.] – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) spoke by phone with community health center leaders from across Illinois today to discuss the challenges faced by these health providers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Duckworth spoke with leaders from the Illinois Primary Health Care Association, Howard Brown Health in Chicago, Heartland Health Services in Peoria and Shawnee Health Service in Carterville. During the call, Duckworth highlighted priorities she will push for in a future bill, including additional funding for community health centers and more PPE for frontline and essential workers.

“First and foremost, I want to say how unbelievably grateful I am for all of the doctors, nurses, janitors, administrators and all health center workers across Illinois,” Duckworth said. “Working in healthcare has always been selfless, but right now, it’s courageous, too. I’ll keep working to make sure our front line health workers and community health centers have the support and resources they deserve.”

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 [supported the supplemental funding bill](#) to provide more money to small businesses, hospitals and health care workers.

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.

For more information about resources available to Illinoisans and what the Senator has done throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, [click here](#).