



Durbin Presses HHS Secretary Azar On Illinois Hospital Funding

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), on a call with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Alex Azar, urged HHS to address COVID-19 relief funding shortfalls at safety net hospitals, including children’s hospitals, in Illinois. Durbin discussed how the latest round of \$10 billion in Provider Relief Fund missed some of the most prominent safety net hospitals in Illinois, and how many are urging for more assistance in order to stay financially viable during the pandemic. Durbin urged Azar to use the remaining \$62 billion in the Provider Relief Fund to fix the payments for these safety net hospitals—which serve low-income and vulnerable patient populations, and are on the front lines of addressing widespread racial disparities that have been magnified by this pandemic.

“As the country continues to grapple with increasing cases of COVID-19, our hospitals remain on the frontlines of the battle against this virus. They’ve had to adjust operations drastically in order to take care of a surge of patients, while also cancelling many other procedures, and that means many are struggling to make ends meet. I urged Secretary Azar to expand our testing capacity and rectify flaws in its funding formulas to ensure our heroic health workers can continue serving their communities.”

To date, Congress has appropriated a total of \$175 billion to assist hospitals with the coronavirus pandemic, with Illinois hospitals receiving \$4 billion so far.

Durbin and Azar also discussed Operation Warp Speed, and how the United States is progressing in developing vaccines and treatments for COVID-19. Durbin urged Azar to not abandon global efforts on vaccine research and development.