

# **Durbin, Duckworth Join Others With Legislation For Bias And Anti-Racism Training In COVID-19 Response**

July 19 2020 4:35 PM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today joined U.S. Senator Kamala D. Harris (D-CA) and colleagues in introducing the *COVID-19 Bias and Anti-Racism Training Act*, legislation to ensure health providers and other individuals involved in COVID-19 testing, treatment, vaccine distribution, and response receive bias and anti-racism training. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the urgent need to address longstanding biases in our health care system.

“Black and Latinx populations in Illinois and across the country are bearing the health and economic brunt of this pandemic. These disparities are a stark reminder of the historical inequities in our health system,” Durbin said. “This legislation will help improve bias and anti-racism training for health care professionals and ensure that all communities are able to receive culturally competent care.”

“This deadly pandemic has put a spotlight on the overwhelming inequities in our healthcare, economic and environmental protection systems that have plagued communities of color for far too long. The awful truth is that here in Illinois—and across the nation—Black and Brown Americans are more likely to die from COVID-19 than white Americans,” said Duckworth. “I’m proud to join Senator Durbin and our colleagues in introducing the *COVID-19 Bias and Anti-Racism Training Act* to help provide and improve care and support for communities of color who have been hard hit by this crisis.”

Black and Latinx individuals across the country are three times as likely to contract COVID-19 compared to white individuals, and are nearly twice as likely to die from the virus. Black Illinoisans make up 15 percent of our state’s population, but account for 30 percent of coronavirus deaths. Latino Illinoisans make up 17 percent of our state’s population, but now account for 31 percent of cases.

The *COVID-19 Bias and Anti-Racism Training Act* would support bias and anti-racism training for individuals involved in COVID-19 testing, treatment, vaccine distribution, and response.

Specifically, the bill would:

- Create a \$200 million grant program for hospitals, other health care providers, state, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments, medical and other health professional training schools, and nonprofits to establish or improve bias and anti-racism training programs for health care providers treating COVID-19 patients and for individuals participating in other response efforts, like contact tracing.
- Prioritize funding for entities in communities with high racial and ethnic disparities in COVID-19 infection, hospitalization, ICU admission, and death rates.
- Require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to collaborate with health care professionals, policy experts specializing in addressing bias and racism within the health care system, and community-based organizations to develop requirements for evidence-based, ongoing bias and anti-racism training.

Along with Durbin, Duckworth, and Harris, this legislation is co-sponsored by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chris Coons (D-DE), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Edward Markey (D-MA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).