

Durbin, Duckworth Cosponsor Legislation To Build Core Public Health Infrastructure Needed To Save Lives, Fight Threats Like Covid-19

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WASHINGTON— This week, U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and 16 of their Democratic Senate colleagues to introduce the *Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act* (PHISLA). The legislation would establish a new core public health infrastructure program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) with up to \$4.5 billion in annual funding to bolster the nation’s efforts to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, and strengthen its ability to respond to other public health challenges going forward.

“The COVID-19 crisis has shown that we must do more to address the economic, racial, and public health disparities that exist across the country, and that we need to fortify our public health infrastructure to prepare every community to handle future health

emergencies,” said Durbin. “We rely upon our state and local health departments to keep us safe from so many health threats. This legislation will ensure they have the resources to improve health equity and respond to health crises.”

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve seen the need for more funding for our hospitals, healthcare workers and public health infrastructure to ensure all Americans have access to reliable care,” Duckworth said. “While the Trump Administration was clearly unprepared to handle the deadly COVID-19 public health emergency, we can ensure that in the future our State, local and tribal governments have the infrastructure in place to help protect Americans against public health crises. This legislation will help provide much-needed resources to our communities.”

PHISLA would establish a core public health infrastructure program to strengthen the country’s public health system—including the nation’s ability to respond to the COVID–19 pandemic—through grants to State, territorial, local, and Tribal health departments and increased investments at the CDC. The funding for the program would ramp up over five years to \$4.5 billion annually and then remain at that level, and the program would be aimed at specifically addressing eight core capabilities:

1. Public health assessment
2. Preparedness and response
3. Policy development and support
4. Communications
5. Community partnership development
6. Organizational competencies
7. Accountability
8. Equity

In addition to Durbin, Duckworth, and Murray, the bill was cosponsored by Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Bob Casey (D-PA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Ed Markey (D-MA), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jack Reed (D-RI), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).

PHISLA has been endorsed by over 50 organizations including Washington State Department of Health; Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials; Public Health Seattle & King County; American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene; The Family Resource Network; Autism Family Services of New Jersey; Caregivers of New Jersey; Epilepsy Services of New Jersey; Epilepsy Alliance of

America; Health Leadership Legacy Project; American Association of Health and Disability; Lakeshore Foundation; Delaware Academy of Medicine/Delaware Public Health Association; American Thoracic Society; American Society for Microbiology; Immunize Nevada; Nevada Public Health Association; Caring Ambassadors Program; Bipartisan Policy Center Action; Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum; Foundation for Healthy Generations; Global Liver Institute; Montana Public Health Association; Hope and Help; Association of Public Health Laboratories; Spina Bifida Association; National Association of County and City Health Officials; Trust for America's Health; New York State Public Health Association; Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids; Association of State and Territorial Health Officers; Prevent Blindness; American Heart Association; Safe States Alliance; Public Health Institute; Public Health Accreditation Board; HIV+Hepatitis Policy Institute; Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health; Gerontological Society of America; Lupus and Allied Diseases Association, Inc.; Health By Design; Indiana Public Health Association; Alliance for Aging Research; Entomological Society of America; CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers; Wisconsin Public Health Association; Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards; New Jersey Public Health Association; American Clinical Laboratory Association; Association of State Public Health Nutritionists; American Lung Association; Association of American Medical Colleges; Prevention Institute; Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology; American Mosquito Control Association; National WIC Association; March of Dimes; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.