

# **Sen. Durbin Discusses Recent Surge Of COVID-19 Cases With Illinois Hospital Officials**

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today, on a call with more than 20 CEOs of Illinois hospitals and AJ Wilhelmi, President of the Illinois Health & Hospital Association, discussed the recent surge in COVID-19 cases in Illinois and how hospitals are fighting the pandemic on the ground. Illinois recorded its highest number of new cases (6,161) on Saturday, and on Sunday, Illinois also recorded its highest number of hospitalized patients (2,605) since June 5. Durbin thanked the hospital representatives for everything their employees—from doctors and nurses, to janitorial and food service staff—have done so far to help Illinois patients and pledged he would continue to push for additional federal relief funds for our hospitals and staffing capacity, as well as increases in personal protective equipment, testing kit supplies, and other medical resources health workers need.

“As COVID-19 cases in Illinois surge to record levels, we are reminded that this virus will continue to strain our health care system and its dedicated employees. In order to fight COVID-19, the federal government has to build upon funding in the CARES Act to provide new assistance to our front line health care workers and hospitals in urban, suburban, and rural communities. For months, I’ve called on Senate Majority Leader McConnell to pass the HEROES Act so we can provide the PPE, testing, and resources to Illinois hospitals. It’s past time for the Senate to act,” Durbin said.

In addition to supporting and overseeing implementation of the CARES Act, which appropriated \$175 billion for hospitals and health providers, Durbin has advanced several bipartisan proposals to bolster our health care workforce and support vulnerable rural hospitals.

Durbin and Senator James Lankford (R-OK) have introduced the bipartisan Rural Hospital Closure Relief Act, a bill that would support financially vulnerable rural hospitals facing risk of closure by updating Medicare’s “Critical Access Hospital” (CAH) designation so more rural hospitals can qualify for this financial lifeline and continue to serve their communities with quality, affordable health care services.

In June, Durbin and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) introduced bipartisan legislation to provide a historic investment in the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), Nurse Corps, and National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) programs to bolster health emergency surge capacity and restore the pipeline of physicians, nurses, and other health professionals to address existing health workforce shortages throughout our country. The Strengthening America’s Health Care Readiness Act, would address these challenges and entice promising students from diverse backgrounds—physicians, dentists, mental health professionals, nurses, and physician assistants—into primary health careers in underserved communities by providing scholarship and loan repayment funding for tens of thousands of clinicians in exchange for a service commitment in an urban or rural area with a shortage of providers. The legislation would also create a new Emergency Service partnership between the NHSC and NDMS to boost our health care surge capacity in response to public health emergencies.