

# **Duckworth, Durbin Introduce Bill to Allow Illinois Senior Living Facility Residents to Continue Receiving Nutritious Meals**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – In response to the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) ongoing efforts to end Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for a group of supportive living facilities (SLFs) in Illinois as early as January 1<sup>st</sup>, U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Dick Durbin (D-IL) introduced legislation that would allow SLFs to continue providing nutritious meals to its residents as required by state law and allow residents at these facilities to continue receiving SNAP benefits. The *Supportive Living Food Access Protection Act* would amend federal law to address USDA’s archaic interpretation of federal regulations by adding Supportive Living Facilities’ innovative residential living framework to the list of facility types protected by federal law. Illinois SLFs serve 8,000 low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities across the state.

“It’s outrageous that USDA is choosing to jeopardize access to nutritious meals for thousands of low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities in Illinois during a deadly global public health crisis,” Duckworth said. “I’m introducing this legislation with Senator Durbin to prevent these harmful efforts from being implemented and support effective community-based services, and I’ll continue working to help ensure that these individuals don’t go hungry this holiday season.”

“For decades, seniors and individuals with disabilities in Illinois have depended on the SNAP program and this community living arrangement,” Durbin said. “It has served them well. This senseless overreach from USDA is a mistake, and is especially harmful during the pandemic. I’m proud to have worked with Senator Duckworth to protect these Illinoisans from losing access to their meals, and our legislation will continue this important effort.”

“The SNAP program is vital to protect the livelihood and wellbeing of our most vulnerable residents across Illinois, especially our seniors and those with disabilities,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “I thank Senator Duckworth and Senator Durbin for their work to protect these benefits and ensure that Senior Living Facilities are able to continue providing meals and other services for older Illinoisans. As always, I remain committed to working alongside Senator Duckworth and Senator Durbin to champion legislation that will improve the lives of residents in our great state.”

There are SLFs in every Illinois Congressional District and in 71 Illinois counties. A complete list of SLFs in Illinois is available [here](#).

In November, Duckworth and Durbin, along with U.S. Representatives Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17) and Rodney Davis (R-IL-13) [led a letter](#) of the Illinois Congressional Delegation to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue opposing the Department’s administrative overreach and ongoing efforts to end SNAP benefits for a group of SLFs in Illinois. The members, in their letter, cite recent efforts by USDA to deny and revoke SNAP participation from these Illinois facilities, despite provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill and Fiscal year 2020 Senate Agriculture Appropriations bill that protect these vulnerable residents and SNAP participation of SLFs.

Illinois’s SLF program was created in 1997 through a state law designed to promote alternatives to institutional nursing settings for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities under Medicaid. For more than twenty years, the Illinois’s SLF program has been a nationally leading model in promoting affordable, independent-living options and has relied upon a federal Medicaid waiver to serve this population.