



Durbin, Cassidy Introduce Bill To Address PPE Shortages, Boost Production In America

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Bill Cassidy, M.D. (R-LA) today introduced new, bipartisan legislation to address shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing supplies. The *Protecting Providers Everywhere (PPE) in America Act* would boost domestic PPE and testing supply production and promote a more sustainable supply chain by ensuring more predictable, dedicated funding from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) to American manufacturers of applicable medical supplies.

The reliance on foreign sources for manufacturing has contributed to the alarming shortages and price spikes of respirators, masks, and nitrile gloves for health care workers, as well as reagents, swabs, and other materials for diagnostic testing. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), an estimated 95 percent of surgical masks and 75 percent of N95 respirators are made overseas.

“We are introducing this bill to improve our COVID-19 response and prepare for future public health emergencies, by increasing domestic production capacity for PPE and medical supplies. It’s an outrage that our health care heroes have not had adequate supplies to stay safe and serve our communities, and the *PPE in America Act* will strengthen our domestic supply chain to ensure we are not caught short-handed again,” Durbin said.

“COVID-19 has shown the danger of our nation’s dependence on life-saving supplies from countries halfway around the world,” said Dr. Cassidy. “This legislation supports jobs here at home, bolsters our independence and strengthens our nation’s supply chain in the face of pandemic.”

As demand from across the globe constrained production capacity for these critical medical supplies throughout the pandemic, prices rose and access in the United States was severely constricted. As a result, heroic doctors, nurses, and other essential workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 response have worked for months with inadequate protection, with a reported 80 percent of nurses reusing single-use equipment.

Specifically, the *PPE in America* Act would authorize a pilot project at the Department of Health and Human Services that would:

- Boost domestic PPE and testing supply production by requiring at least 40 percent, and up to 100 percent, of applicable supplies procured by the SNS to be from domestic manufacturers (with safeguards for availability and pricing);
- Support predictability for the domestic manufacturing base by establishing a replenishable mechanism for the SNS by routinely transferring supplies to federal agencies or selling to the commercial health care market. This arrangement would streamline management of supplies and use the SNS as an engine for domestic manufacturing capabilities, while mitigating the current risk of product expiration.

The following organizations have endorsed the legislation: American Hospital Association, International Safety Equipment Association, Illinois Nurses Association, Illinois Health and Hospital Association.

U.S. Representative Brad Schneider (D-IL-10) and David McKinley (R-WV-01) will be introducing the companion bill in the House.