



Durbin, Duckworth Join Colleagues To Introduce Bill To Improve And Maintain Public Health Infrastructure

March 10 2021 4:33 PM

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and 14 Democratic Senate colleagues to introduce the Public Health Infrastructure Saves Lives Act (PHISLA). The legislation would establish a new core public health infrastructure program, which ramps 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.

“This pandemic has shown us that public health should be treated like national security. We must put forward serious investments to strengthen the systems we currently have in place and provide communities more assistance. This bill takes what we’ve learned from the heroic leadership of our Illinois health departments over the past year and makes smart investments to maintain America’s public health infrastructure so we can be prepared for the next crisis. The stronger our public health strategies are, the healthier we will be,” Durbin said.

“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. “As we work to continue recovering from the pandemic, we must help ensure that our State, local and tribal governments have the infrastructure in place to help protect Americans against public health crises now and in the future. This legislation will help provide much-needed resources to our communities.”

The re-introduction of PHISLA comes as Trust for America’s Health (TFAH) released its [annual report](#) earlier today evaluating the nation’s public health emergency

preparedness. After evaluating each states' performance on 10 key emergency preparedness indicators, TFAH found room for improvement in every jurisdiction. It placed 20 states and the District of Columbia in a high level of preparedness category, 15 states in a middle preparation tier and 15 states in a low degree of preparation tier. In its federal recommendations, the report calls for \$4.5 billion in sustained annual investments in cross-cutting health capabilities—as proposed in PHISLA.

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 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The bill also supports development and implementation of national public health accreditation. 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