

# Durbin, Duckworth Meet With Blessing Hospital System Leadership To Discuss Rural Health Challenges

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) met with Maureen Kahn, CEO of Blessing Health System located in Quincy, Illinois. In their meeting, Durbin, Duckworth, and Kahn spoke about

the challenges rural hospitals face, including workforce shortages, the burnout health professionals are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing public health threats.

“Day in and day out, we rely on our health care workers, who face incredible challenges to deliver high quality care to our patients. COVID-19 will not be the last health crisis our country sees, and we must ensure that our rural hospitals are well-equipped to care for their community’s needs,” said Durbin. “It was informative to speak with Blessing to discuss how the federal government can better support rural hospitals amid the strains they face.”

“I am so grateful to all of the doctors, nurses, janitors, administrators and all hospital workers across rural Illinois,” Duckworth said. “Working in medicine has always been selfless, but during the pandemic, it has been incredibly courageous, too. I’ll keep working with Senator Durbin to help ensure our front-line health workers like those at Blessing have the support and resources they need.”

To address other rural health care workforce issues, Senator Durbin has introduced the bipartisan *Rural America Health Corps Act*, which would create a National Health Service Corps pilot program to test whether an expanded loan repayment award and service commitment - \$200,000 over five years – would improve recruitment and retention in rural communities. Additionally, Senator Durbin recently announced funding for rural fire and emergency medical services (EMS) agencies through the *SIREN Act*, a grant program created by Durbin. Funding through this program is available for training and recruiting EMS staff, conducting certification courses, and purchasing equipment.