

Durbin Statement On Senate Help Committee Markup Of Package To Bolster Health Workforce

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, today released the following statement after the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) passed a package of legislation to help bolster America’s health workforce, including reauthorizations of the mandatory funding for community health centers (CHCs) and the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), which are set to expire on September 30. In order to help pay for this legislative package, the Senate Judiciary Committee—which Durbin chairs—is working with the HELP Committee on the use of prescription drug competition measures reported by the Judiciary Committee to provide savings.

Among other things, the HELP Committee package triples the mandatory funding level of the NHSC—up from \$310 million per year to \$950 million per year. This investment reflects the efforts of Durbin and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) to provide historic investments in the NHSC scholarship and loan repayment program to address health workforce shortages, the [*Restoring America's Health Care Workforce and Readiness Act*](#). Additionally, the package includes Durbin's [new provision](#) with Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), which would provide a federal wage differential for the salary gap between clinical nursing and nurse faculty roles—to help fill desperately needed nurse faculty positions across the country.

“In my travels around Illinois over the August work period, I sat down with hospital leaders, public health officials, and other health care providers. And their message was clear: Our health care professionals put their all into caring for their patients, but the demands of the pandemic have exacerbated workforce shortages, especially in our underserved rural and urban communities. What's the consequence of this shortage of medical professionals? The patients suffer.

“Thankfully, the Senate HELP Committee advanced today a package of bills to help bolster America's health workforce, including many priorities that I have championed. And in my role as Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I'm proud to be working with Chair Sanders to advance our shared priorities to help pay for this important legislative package.

“The solutions to many of our pressing health care challenges are in hand. The question is whether we can find a bipartisan commitment to move them forward. I hope we can.”

The package also includes provisions aligned with Durbin's [Rural Health Care Workforce Roadmap](#), including:

- Increases funding for CHCs, including new dedicated funding for construction to provide oral health services, and school-based health centers;
- Doubles funding for the Teaching Health Center Graduate Medical Education program, which funds medical residencies in community-based CHC settings;
- Reauthorizes funding for a grant program to open new residency programs in rural areas;
- Provides one-time, mandatory funding totaling \$1.2 billion to support the capacity of community college and state university nursing programs; and
- Establishes a new \$300 million grant program for community health centers and rural health clinics to partner with community colleges and high schools to build the health workforce pipeline for allied health positions, especially in underserved areas.

