

# **Durbin, Warren, Ossoff Lead Colleagues In Raising Concerns With Wellpath Over Inadequate Health Care Services In Prisons And Jails Nationwide**

December 20 2023 9:45 AM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, joined U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Jon Ossoff (D-GA), Ed Markey (D-MA), Raphael Warnock (D-GA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Laphonza Butler (D-CA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Peter Welch (D-VT) to send a letter to Wellpath—the nation’s largest private provider of prison health care—raising concern over reports of inadequate care at federal, state, and local prisons and jails.

“Since its creation, Wellpath has been the target of multiple federal investigations and lawsuits, and the company has faced growing public scrutiny,” wrote the lawmakers. “A host of federal investigations, press reports, and reports by incarcerated people have revealed apparent deficiencies in Wellpath’s care.”

Wellpath is a private equity-owned, for-profit company and currently operates as the nation’s largest private provider of health care services in prisons and jails. Recent media reporting has revealed alarming inadequacies in care, including reports of: time-sensitive care being delayed; outright denials of care; inadequate staffing; Wellpath staff members’ negligence and failure to follow physician treatment plans and Wellpath’s own policies; and the inappropriate use of restraints and solitary confinement for people with mental health needs.

In the letters, the lawmakers also highlight systemic problems driven by Wellpath’s incentive to maximize its profits, including “minimizing the number of healthcare services provided and opting to provide less resource-intensive services.”

“While some contracts increase Wellpath’s compensation for emergency services such as ambulance runs or decrease compensation for failures such as not triaging sick call requests, pay generally does not increase with the volume, quality, or complexity of medical services provided,” wrote the lawmakers. “Some Wellpath contracts also appear to incentivize the company to reduce the number of transfers to hospitals or to employ fewer staff members.”

The lawmakers have asked for more information from Wellpath in order to better understand its conduct and operations in jails and prisons and its efforts to provide adequate care to patients.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).

In response to reports of inadequate health care for inmates in Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facilities, Durbin has repeatedly urged BOP to remedy its staffing crisis while also calling for compassionate release for qualifying incarcerated people who are elderly or ill. Durbin has worked with Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA) on introducing the [Safer Detention Act](#) as well, which would widen eligibility criteria for compassionate release and reform the Elderly Home Detention Pilot Program.