

To: Illinois Association of Health Care Facilities
From: Members of the Illinois General Assembly
Re: The fight against COVID-19
Date: April 21, 2020

The COVID-19 public health crisis has our Country living through unprecedented times. Our State is under a stay-at-home order resulting in school closures, drastically altered restaurant operations, and banned gatherings of ten people or more. In the midst of this stay-at-home order, some services cannot stop and some workers must still report to the frontlines.

Nursing home workers are among those our state is depending on to show up and care for our loved ones. As elected officials – as Illinoisans – we owe them and their families a great deal of gratitude and deep appreciation. We are concerned to hear that there is not enough PPE being provided to workers in ALL job classifications in nursing homes. If we are going to flatten the curve of COVID-19, we have to provide the appropriate PPE, for workers and consumers to feel safe. Workers should be informed and trained on how to deal with COVID-19 in all facilities for their safety as well as the residents. Our collective goal is to save as many lives as possible and that can only be done when employers protect their employees.

In addition, these workers are among the lowest paid in the state. Last year the Illinois General Assembly took action to increase the reimbursement rates for nursing homes by \$240 million. We supported this measure, in part because it was assured by the nursing home industry that a significant portion of this money would be spent on direct care staff – the very staff on the frontlines fighting back against COVID-19.

Unfortunately, we've learned that this hasn't been the case as workers from over 100 nursing facilities are bargaining to finalize a contract before their current agreement expires at the end of this month. As some of the lawmakers who authorized this funding, we remain hopeful that the nursing home industry intends to offer their workers a contract that truly reflects the large increase in dollars that the industry was given. This also comes in light of news that the nursing home industry is asking for millions more in immediate state funding for purposes which are unclear. We are alarmed to learn of this request when the money previously authorized hasn't yet been used for its intended purpose.

We urge the Illinois Association of Health Care Facilities to thoroughly consider their actions in this extremely trying time. Workers deserve respect and dignity. This starts with adequate personal protective equipment, a level of paid sick time that you would expect for yourself, and wages that don't keep employees living in poverty.

If the COVID-19 public health pandemic has accomplished one thing it has uncovered the very real problem that frontline healthcare workers haven't received the support, respect, and compensation they deserve to support themselves and their families. Please consider contributing to the solution. Now is the time to save lives – not pennies.

Regards,

State Senator Robert Peters
State Senator Ann Gillespie
State Senator Emil Jones, III
State Senator Ram Villivalam
State Senator Elgie R. Sims, Jr.
State Senator Antonio Munoz
State Senator Melinda Bush

State Senator Heather A. Steans
State Senator Omar Aquino
State Senator Iris Y. Martinez
State Senator Kimberly A. Lightford
State Senator Laura Fine
State Senator Jennifer Bertino-Tarrant
State Senator Napoleon Harris, III
State Senator Christopher Belt
State Senator Cristina Castro
State Senator Robert F. Martwick
State Senator Jacqueline Y. Collins
State Senator Celina Villanueva
State Senator Michael E. Hastings
State Representative Kelly Cassidy
State Representative Lindsey LaPointe
State Representative Marcus C. Evans, Jr.
State Representative Mary E. Flowers
State Representative Sonya M. Harper
State Representative Robyn Gabel
State Representative Lamont J. Robinson, Jr.
State Representative Jennifer Gong-Gershowitz
State Representative Joyce Mason
State Representative Jonathan "Yoni" Pizer
State Representative Frances Ann Hurley
State Representative Sam Yingling
State Representative Emanuel Chris Welch
State Representative La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative Arthur Turner
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State Representative Deb Conroy
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State Representative Curtis J. Tarver, II
State Representative Mary Edly-Allen
State Representative Kambium Buckner
State Representative LaToya Greenwood

State Representative Maurice A. West, II
State Representative John Connor
State Representative Gregory Harris
State Representative Carol Ammons
State Representative Anne Stava-Murray
State Representative Jehan Gordon-Booth
State Representative Camille Y. Lilly
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State Representative Diane Pappas
State Representative Anthony DeLuca
State Representative Kathleen Willis
State Representative Barbara Hernandez
State Representative Katie Stuart
State Representative Ann M. Williams
State Representative Anna Moeller
State Representative Michael Halpin
State Representative Mark L. Walker
State Representative Bob Morgan
State Representative Larry Walsh, Jr.

CC: Governor J.B. Pritzker
Speaker Michael J. Madigan
Senate President Don Harmon
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Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle