

October 14, 2019

The Honorable Richard Durbin  
United States Senate  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

On behalf of the Illinois Poison Center (IPC), a service of the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA), thank you for your continued support for the Poison Control Center (PCC) program in the fiscal year (FY) 2020 Labor-Health and Human Services (HHS) Subcommittee Appropriations bill. We request the highest funding level possible be provided within the allocation given to House and Senate negotiators. This funding is crucial for the continuing operation of IPC and the nationwide PCC system.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), unintentional poisoning is the leading cause of injury death in the United States. Through the efforts of the PCC program, every person in Illinois and around the country has access to trained personnel via a nationwide toll-free Poison Help number (1-800-222-1222). Poison control centers operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and manage approximately 3 million cases annually from the public, healthcare providers, 911 public-safety access points, health departments, law enforcement, first responders, and other public safety agencies.

In 2018, IPC managed nearly 78,000 cases, over 40 percent of which involved children aged 5 and under. Because the IPC is able to resolve 90 percent of exposure cases over the phone, over 30,000 unnecessary emergency department visits were prevented last year alone. Medical professionals throughout Illinois turn to IPC for specialized toxicology consult services to improve patient outcomes and reduce unnecessary hospital stays: more than 24,000 of IPC's annual cases originate from a healthcare facility. Overall, IPC saves over \$60 million dollars each year in healthcare costs. In addition, IPC and PCCs across the country have been integral in the nation's response to the opioid epidemic, as well as the currently evolving crisis of vaping-associated lung injury.

Earlier this year, the House passed the FY 2020 Labor-HHS bill, which included \$24.846 million for the national network of 55 PCCs, while the Senate bill released last month included \$23.846 million. The additional funding for the PCC program provided in these bills would bolster national public education and awareness efforts and provide critical support for patients and

their families, including those in underserved communities. It would also support training for first responders, law enforcement, and others who may be called upon to render aid in opioid and other substance use overdose situations.

Thank you again for your ongoing support, and we welcome the opportunity to share additional information with you on the important work IPC does on behalf of all Illinoisans.

Sincerely,

A.J. Wilhelmi  
President and CEO  
Illinois Health and Hospital Association

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