



Media Contact:

Beth Fox, Director of Communications
(217) 541-7313
bfox@iphca.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IPHCA Honors Senator Dick Durbin with 2024 Distinguished Community Health Center Advocate Award

Springfield, Ill., August 9, 2024 – Today, the Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) honored U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) for his leadership on behalf of community health centers and the under-resourced communities.

Two IPHCA health center leaders: Iris Wesley, Chief Executive Officer at SIU Center for Family Medicine and Heather Burton, President and Chief Executive Officer, Central Counties Health Centers, Inc., and IPHCA Board Chair, along with Ollie Idowu, IPHCA President and Chief Executive Officer, presented the 2024 Distinguished Community Health Center Advocate Award to Senator Durbin at SIU Center for Family Medicine in Springfield. The award ceremony was attended by community health center leaders to help thank him for his commitment to the community health center movement over nearly three decades serving in the United States Senate.

IPHCA and its member health centers are thankful for the Senator's dedication to ensuring healthcare access and equity, along with his steadfast commitment to strengthening the health care workforce through investments in programs like the National Health Services Corps, which supports more than 18,000 primary care medical, dental, and behavioral health providers with scholarships and loan repayment opportunities.

"Illinois is fortunate to have such a strong advocate for health equity representing us in Congress," said Idowu. "Senator Durbin has been a strong champion for all health centers, especially those in his home state. His commitment to integrated health care has helped ensure that more than 31.5 million people a year have access to whole-person care. In Illinois, 1.5 million people, or one in nine, receive comprehensive care at a community health center. Thank you, Senator Durbin, for all you do."

"From Chicago to Carbondale, and everywhere in between, health centers are an essential part of our health care system," said Durbin. "But we're facing shortages, making patients face months-long waits for treatment or drive hours to see a specialist. I am committed to addressing these shortages by increasing federal funding for the National Health Service Corps to provide scholarship and loan repayments to dentists, doctors, and mental health professionals. I am honored to receive this award, but the true recognition goes towards health care providers and their tireless work to treat our patients."

The award was presented by IPHCA, SIU Center for Family Medicine and Central Counties Health Centers, Inc. on behalf of the National Association for Community Health Centers (NACHC) during National Health

Center Week (NHCW). For more than 30 years, NHCW has been a chance to celebrate health centers as go-to providers of integrated primary medical care, behavioral health treatment, and dental services.

About Illinois Primary Health Care Association (IPHCA) – IPHCA is a non-profit trade association that represents community health centers throughout the state. Illinois' 55 community health centers provide comprehensive, integrated primary care including medical, behavioral, and oral health care to roughly 1.5 million patients annually across more than 450 service sites in underserved rural, urban, and suburban communities.

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