



COUNTY OF WILL

WILL COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING • 302 N. CHICAGO STREET • JOLIET, ILLINOIS 60432

Lawrence M. Walsh
Will County Executive

Herbert Brooks, Jr.
Speaker – Will County Board

November 25, 2014

The Honorable Representative Bobby Rush
2268 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bobby Rush,

On behalf of Will County, we are writing to request that you support funding for hospital preparedness in a supplemental funding package to address the evolving Ebola crisis. The County is grateful for the hospital preparedness funding outlined in President Obama's emergency appropriation request, however we want to ensure that resources are prioritized first and foremost toward the five U.S. cities where passengers from West Africa must land and the hospitals in those cities that have volunteered to serve as Ebola network hospitals. In addition we respectfully request that you reevaluate funding for pandemic and all-hazards preparedness activities, in particular for the Hospital Preparedness Program (HPP), as you finalize Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 appropriations.

Since 2011 Illinois has lost over 20 percent of HPP funding and the City of Chicago has lost over 23 percent. With the U.S. Department of Homeland Security requiring airline passengers whose travel originated in Liberia, Sierra Leone or Guinea to fly into one of the five airports with enhanced Ebola screening procedures in place, Chicago O'Hare International Airport being one, Illinois is at an increased risk of receiving an individual with EVD. With that said, the four Ebola resource centers in Illinois, as well as hospitals across the state, have invested millions of dollars preparing and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE), and additional lab equipment to ensure the safety of both of potential patients and health care workers. Additionally, hospitals have invested countless hours of training to prepare for such an incident, resulting in increased staffing costs. Moreover, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recently activated the expert medical staff at Illinois Poison Center (IPC) to operate the state's Ebola hotline, which health care workers and the general public can access by dialing 1-800-889-3931.

As you may know, the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Reauthorization Act (PAHPRA) of 2013 included funding for public health emergency preparedness, as well as several federal, state and local surveillance and situational awareness programs. PAHPRA also makes clear the significant role poison centers have on the disaster/emergency response and surveillance infrastructure network. Funding for the HPP, however, has not been restored to the pre-sequestration level of \$358 million, which is significantly below the \$375 million authorized by PAHPRA. Appropriating the authorized \$375 million is critical to ensuring that our hospitals have the needed resources and that stakeholders, like the IPC, remain available to assist state and local authorities during a public health emergency, like EVD.

In addition, it is our understanding that President Obama's emergency appropriation request will include resources beyond the Hospital Preparedness Program to assist hospitals in their efforts to prepare to receive and treat patients with EVD. The four Ebola resource centers in Chicago and hospitals throughout Illinois have been investing significant time and resources to enhancing our collective ability to meet the needs of Ebola patients and their caregivers, and we ask you to consider this during your deliberations.

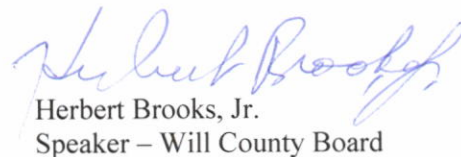
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In closing, we urge you to support adequate hospital preparedness funding in an emergency appropriation package and fully funding the HPP at \$375 million to ensure that our local hospitals have the funding necessary to prepare for an EVD outbreak in Illinois or other public health emergency. Thank you for your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lawrence M. Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lawrence M. Walsh
Will County Executive

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Herbert Brooks, Jr.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "H".

Herbert Brooks, Jr.
Speaker – Will County Board