

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 16, 2018

Dr. Nirav Shah
Director
Illinois Department of Public Health
525-535 West Jefferson Street
Springfield, IL 62761

Dear Dr. Shah:

This week, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) confirmed three additional cases of Legionnaires' disease among residents of the Illinois Veterans' Home (IVH) Quincy—bringing the total number of confirmed legionellosis at IVH Quincy to 66 since 2015. While we appreciate that—unlike in previous instances—IDPH appears to have disclosed these most recent cases in a timely manner, we remain concerned that important details are still being withheld from the public. For instance, the lack of disclosure regarding which building or buildings these most recent cases were detected in may hamper the ongoing and critical dialogue about how to prevent and mitigate further outbreaks at IVH Quincy.

As you know, IVH Quincy's Elmore building has had a particularly high prevalence of Legionnaires' disease cases since 2015. In fact, the Elmore building had the highest number of ill residents with 13 sickened in 2015 alone. In their final 2016 trip report after investigating that epidemic, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that, compared to residents of some of the other buildings on IVH Quincy's campus, residents of the skilled nursing units in the Elmore building "had significantly increased odds" of Legionnaires' disease. Of those 13 sickened in Elmore, it has been reported that four died. In 2017, another three residents of the Elmore building were sickened and one died. Further troubling, the results of the CDC's final 2018 trip report—where they tested environmental samples across IVH Quincy's campus—found just one bulk water sample positive for *Legionella*, in the Elmore building. Moreover, the CDC stated that this most recently detected bacteria was "the same type associated with the 2015 outbreak and recovered again from the facility in 2016."

As such, we request a written response to the following questions by February 23, 2018:

- 1) With respect to these three most recently confirmed cases, on what dates did each resident first display signs of pneumonia? On what dates did you have laboratory confirmation of Legionnaires' disease diagnoses for each resident?
- 2) In which building(s) was each of the residents who were diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease in this latest outbreak living? Have you informed other residents living in or staff working in this building(s) of the outbreak?
- 3) On what dates did IDPH inform each of the following about the latest Legionnaires' disease outbreak: the residents and families at IVH Quincy, IVH Quincy staff, Adams County Public Health Officials, and Governor Rauner?

- 4) On what dates did IDPH inform the CDC of this latest outbreak of Legionnaires' disease? Has IDPH invited the CDC to Quincy to provide on-the-ground assistance in light of this latest outbreak? If so, on what date?
- 5) Has a source for this latest outbreak of Legionnaires' disease been identified?

The refusal to identify the building(s) which is the site of recent infections on the basis of HIPAA is indefensible. CDC, a federal health agency, has specifically identified buildings such as Elmore in its reports, and further, HIPAA was written to protect the identity of patients, not buildings.

We urge you to take every available precaution and pursue every available option in order to prevent and mitigate further outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease at IVH Quincy. And, as you deal with the ongoing, unfortunate, and unacceptable recurrence of Legionnaires' disease at IVH Quincy, we implore you to uphold a commitment to transparency so that residents, families, and staff at IVH Quincy, as well as the public, can have the most up-to-date and complete information available in order to respond to this public health crisis in a timely fashion.

We look forward to your written responses, and one again are prepared to provide federal assistance at request.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator