

three times what a nurse is usually paid at the same place—and that was before the coronavirus rampage across our Nation.

This pandemic has magnified these shortages in our system. In my State of Illinois, Governor Pritzker had to call providers out of retirement from other States to deliver surge care while fourth-year medical students at the University of Illinois at Chicago were graduated early so that they could go to work.

Over the past 6 months, America's healthcare workers have faced incredible strains on the frontlines in our fight against the coronavirus. Hundreds of healthcare workers have, tragically, died from COVID-19, tens of thousands have been infected, and countless more endured trauma and burnout from intense patient care.

The crisis has also compounded alarming health disparities for Black and Latinx Americans, who are three times more likely to get sick and die from COVID-19 than White patients. A lack of minority physicians and health professionals of color contributes to this unconscionable inequity. In 2018, only 4 percent of incoming medical students in Illinois were Black men. A recent study found that there are fewer Black male medical students today than there were in 1978. That is 42 years ago.

The simple economics of American medical education pose a barrier to our health workforce needs. We take our most promising students, put them through years of rigorous education and training, license them after a backbreaking residency on one condition: They have to be prepared to assume a student debt of, on average, more than \$200,000 to be a doctor in America.

The burden of paying off these loans steers some of our best and brightest minds into higher paying specialties and communities, leaving many areas with gaps and vulnerable to the challenges we are facing today.

To address these health workforce challenges and medical disparities and to bolster surge capacity for future emergencies, I have partnered with Senator MARCO RUBIO of Florida. Together, we have introduced Strengthening America's Health Care Readiness Act, immediately restoring our pipeline of doctors, nurses, and other providers. How do we do it? We provide scholarships and loan repayment funding through the National Health Service Corps and Nurse Corps to those who commit to serve in needy areas.

In 27 States, more than 70 percent of inpatient hospital beds are full. One of the major issues with this capacity strain is the lack of providers to actually staff these health units. Our bill would help to surge tens of thousands of clinicians into these communities. To narrow disparities that I mentioned earlier, our legislation would emphasize recruitment from populations historically underrepresented in

healthcare, and our bill would enhance our emergency preparedness by providing loan repayment for clinicians who serve in a reserve capacity—similar to our National Guard—who could be deployed from the private practice to serve in disaster locations.

Representative SCHAKOWSKY—JAN SCHAKOWSKY of Chicago—is our partner in the House. We are pleased to have the support of the American Medical Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges, the National Association of Community Health Centers, and many more.

Senator RUBIO and I are working to include this policy in the next coronavirus relief package. We urge our colleagues to support it.

BELARUS

Madam President, the other day, the Chicago Tribune ran a story with this moving headline:

Her husband jailed, her kids sent away, a 37-year-old ex-teacher is running for president. She's trying to beat "Europe's last dictator."

The story went on to explain the courageous effort of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya to run for the election on August 9 in Belarus for President, where the country's strongman, Alexander Lukashenko, regularly runs sham elections and usually caps them off by jailing anyone who has the temerity, or nerve, to run against him. In fact, he jailed Sviatlana's husband—a popular online commentator—a few months ago. He disqualified or jailed other candidates and harassed and detained protesters and journalists, including those from Radio Free Europe.

I am not surprised by what I read in the Tribune. You see, 10 years ago, I went to Belarus, just after the equally appalling December 2010 Presidential election in which the same dictator, Lukashenko, jailed the opposition candidates. When I arrived there just after the election, I had a meeting I will never forget. It was with the family members of many of these jailed candidates. They were deeply concerned for the safety of their loved ones who had been rounded up by Lukashenko's KGB—and, yes, he still calls his secret police the KGB.

They spoke movingly—these members of the family—about their admiration for their loved ones who had risked so much just to run in an election and lose against Lukashenko. They spoke of the fear of what would happen at the hands of Lukashenko's henchmen.

I later told their stories on the floor of the Senate. Shortly thereafter, the Senate passed a resolution that I introduced with Senators McCain, Lieberman, and others that said that the announced result of this election in Belarus was neither credible nor sustainable since they jailed the political candidates who opposed Lukashenko. Eventually, all of them were released, but it took time.

Here we go again—witnessing the same brutality and deprivation for the

most basic demographic freedoms on the European continent. Clearly, Lukashenko knows he cannot win a fair election, so he turns to the usual autocrats' playbook—harassing and jailing opposition, rigging and discrediting the electoral process, and unleashing brutality on anyone who resisted.

I am here to say to Mr. Lukashenko, no one in the West is fooled. That is why I am pleased to have introduced a resolution with Senators Rubio, Cardin, and others that calls for the release of those disgracefully jailed during the Belarus election period. It calls for basic international election norms to be adhered to, including the allowing of international and local election observers and for the peaceful exercise of basic democratic rights.

I want to thank my colleagues who joined me on this measure. I believe this matter has been passed by live consent. I thank my colleagues for giving me the opportunity to let them know about this violation of democratic values in Belarus.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

HEALS ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, every day we can see that this public health crisis is also an economic crisis. During the shutdowns, some employers shuttered completely, and others were forced to lay off workers. Tens of millions of jobs were saved thanks to the Paycheck Protection Program and other CARES Act provisions, but millions of other Americans lost their jobs and remain unemployed.

While job numbers have improved since the more dire days of March and April, there are still many Americans facing unemployment. Talks are continuing to determine how best to modify and extend a Federal supplement to State unemployment insurance programs, but those talks are going miserably slowly.

These State programs and the extra Federal aid have been important safety nets for folks who have lost their income, but they are only a piece of what we can and should do and what a bill before the U.S. Senate lays out. It is called the HEALS Act, put forth by our leader.

As the leader said yesterday, we know that these programs shouldn't pay someone more to stay home than essential workers are making by working hard. We also know that most people would prefer to have a reliable job and avoid layoff entirely. That is why Republicans, as part of the HEALS Act, have put forward several additional proposals to help already unemployed Americans and prevent others