

**U.S. CONGRESSWOMAN ROBIN KELLY LEGISLATIVE FORUM RESPONSE STATEMENT**  
**October 04, 2018**

*Chicago Chapter National Black Nurses Association Legislative Forum Questions*

**Top Questions**

**1. What is your position on RN mandatory staffing requirement proposal S. 1063/HR 2392.**

I am an enthusiastic co-sponsor of my colleague Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky's bill, H.R. 2392, which, if enacted would move the needle forward on nurse staffing standards for hospital patient safety and quality care.

**2. Can you share your connection with the local and state level of government and the resources you brought to the State of Illinois?**

Last Congress, we recovered half a million dollars in resources for 2<sup>nd</sup> District constituents. Last November, we secured \$3.75 million in grants for our police. As of April 2018, we recouped just shy of \$19,000 for constituents, and this does not yet include cases pending from May to present-day. We also secured \$3 million in support for fire-fighters across 25 fire departments in the 2<sup>nd</sup> District.

**General Questions**

**1. How do you see your role in ensuring the public's safety in laws with regards to healthcare policy and the practice of nursing in Illinois?**

I see my role as informed, relentless agitator for health equity policy. As Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Braintrust, I have been working with my colleagues who are Members of the Congressional Tri-Caucus—that is, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC)—to push for the adoption of the Health Equity and Accountability (HEAA). HEAA is a comprehensive plan to actually end health inequity in America. It's Democrats' way of showing American families what we're fighting for and what we'll continue fighting for. I've heard from so many constituents – Republican and Democrat, urban and rural – who want us to do something to make healthcare affordable for families. Sadly, since my time in Congress, my Republican colleagues have shown little willingness to expand healthcare and end health inequity, Republicans are working overtime to strip 22 million Americans of their lifesaving health insurance by undermining the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

As the ACA expanded care and access to care to previously uninsured populations, most significantly impacting low and moderate-income individuals and families, the demand for additional providers, namely for nurse professionals, has exponentially increased. Especially for outpatient nurses, as the focus of care shifts from hospital emergency settings to community and primary care facilities, like health centers, and to Patient Centered Medical Homes (PCMHs). As the nation's baby boomers exceed retirement age, nursing geriatric care will also be at an all-time high. Over the next three years, into 2020, nursing professionals are projected to burgeon from 3.5 million to almost 4 million, simultaneous to a severe physician shortage across the nation. The field of nursing—especially for registered nurses—is projected to grow by more than 15% by

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2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The rate for nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, and nurse midwives is expected to grow by 31% by 2022. Both the supply and demand for nursing professionals has risen and will continue to rise. Nursing professionals are needed now more than ever.

Recognizing the crucial intervention of nurses, I will remain very supportive of legislative efforts that bolster nursing work environments, promote the role of nursing in eradicating health inequities across our nation, and that expand resources and supports to current nurses, nurses in the healthcare workforce pipeline, and young men and women who are considering becoming nurses.

**2. Illinois' credit rating is stuck at junk bond rating. Cite three ways of improving the state's credit rating.**

The three biggest drivers of Illinois's junk bond status are the state's unfunded pension liabilities, chronic budget deficits (or no budget at all), and slow national economic growth.

While targeted tax increases are needed, we cannot tax our way out of this problem. Increased state revenue will come from strategic investments in growing business sectors and technologies that Illinois is uniquely positioned to lead. Technological investments in precision agriculture, telemedicine, rural broadband, and medical services and community infrastructure in traditionally underserved communities will create jobs, expand wealth, and greatly increase the tax base. Illinois can be a leader on these issues and doing so will help drive growth in both IL and across the country.

Similarly, expanding the tax base and creating opportunity will address the state's chronic budget shortfalls. However, the long-term solution to budget deficits – both in Springfield and D.C. is a return to a sense of collegiality and comradery between Democrats and Republicans.

**3. Cite two ways to decrease unemployment in Illinois.**

Illinois ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in national unemployment. Right now, there are nearly 15,000 unfilled, high-paying advancing manufacturing jobs available in the Chicago area but there aren't trained workers for these good-paying (\$70K/yr) jobs. I am very sensitive to the implications of people who are out of work, or out of school, or out of some form of training that would otherwise secure or increase their socioeconomic position. That's why I introduced Today's American Dream Act, which we affectionately call "TADA" (H.R. 3839). If adopted into law, TADA would invest in workers through workforce training/re-training, expanded career, technical and apprenticeship programs; empower our innovation economy to create the jobs of today and tomorrow through new market tax credits, funding local incubators and generating a new generation of STEM teachers; and Invest in our communities by investing directly in local, job-creating small businesses.

Illinois families and many families around this country hasn't fully recovered from the Great Recession. They are still struggling. We need to invest in the American people, so they can live the American Dream.