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Illinois Poison Center Faces Closure in Summer 2014

State Senator Don Harmon introduces legislation to save state's only poison center

(Chicago) February 20, 2014 – Due to increases in federal and state budget deficits, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC), the nation's oldest poison center, is facing closure on June 30, 2014-making Illinois the only state in the country without poison center services. Funding for the IPC, which handles more than 80,000 calls annually, is down \$1.5 million or 43 percent since 2009, greatly impacting its ability to effectively provide treatment services to the general public, hospital staff and the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) community.

"We have responded to our funding losses through staff cuts and other reductions, but, unfortunately, we are now at the point where additional cutbacks will harm our ability to continue our life and cost-saving work," said Dr. Michael Wahl, IPC Medical Director. "Without stable funding, the IPC is facing closure, which will not only greatly harm public safety in Illinois, but will also result in increased ambulance runs, emergency department (ED) visits and unnecessary health care costs across the state."

In an effort to save the state's first responder in poison emergencies, and free up much needed resources into the state's general revenue fund, State Senator Don Harmon has introduced legislation, deemed the "2 Cent Solution" that redirects two cents of an existing wireless surcharge to fund a portion of the IPC. The "2 Cent Solution" will not raise cell phone bills.

"Saving the Illinois Poison Center is vital to the safety and health of Illinois citizens, especially our children. So we cannot allow Illinois to become the only state in the Union without a poison control center. This is literally a life-and-death issue," said Harmon. "And, when we deal quickly with these situations we keep people out of the hospital -saving money for consumers and for our health care system."

In 2013 alone, the IPC saved Illinoisans more than \$52 million dollars. It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in the IPC, there is more than a \$13 dollar savings in reduced health care and lost productivity costs. IPC staff prevented an estimated 35,000 ED visits and saved approximately \$14.1 million in Medicaid savings last year alone. A call to the IPC from an ED doctor or nurse can shorten a patient's admitted length of stay by an average of one to three days.

"Without the services of the Illinois Poison Center, my granddaughter may have sustained serious injuries. I am extremely grateful to the poison center staff for saving her from harm, and preventing an avoidable and expensive trip to the hospital," said Diane Pignato of Palatine. "People need to understand what a dangerous loss this will be for our children, grandchildren and state as a whole."

For more information on the IPC's "2 Cent Solution," please visit the [IPC's website](#).

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The Illinois Poison Center is a non-profit health service that provides the people of Illinois with comprehensive and trusted information and treatment advice on potentially harmful substances via a free, I:\Media\Press Releases\2014\IPC Funding Press Release.Doc

confidential 24-hour hotline staffed by specially trained doctors, nurses and pharmacists.