



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

## Tedisco FOILS Hochul on “Independent” COVID Report Contract

JAMES TEDISCO March 24, 2024

| ISSUE: COVID-19 NURSING HOME DEATHS; INVESTIGATION, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC;  
EXECUTIVE ORDERS, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19: NURSING HOMES; HEALTH  
COMMISSIONER



In advance of Monday’s 4th anniversary of March 25, 2020, Pandemic Executive Order, Senator Tedisco files Freedom of Information Law request seeking specifics of Hochul’s \$4.3 million contract with Olson Group for “way-overdue” pandemic policy review of the deaths of 15,000 New Yorkers in state-regulated nursing homes

Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C-Ballston Lake) today is continuing his four-year-long crusade for justice for the 15,000 New Yorkers who lost their lives to COVID in state-regulated nursing

homes at the height of the pandemic.

Senator Tedisco, today announced he has formerly filed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request seeking a copy of the contract between the Hochul Administration and the Virginia-based Olson Group, LTD, with respect to the firm's "reviewing the policies and decisions of the State of New York pertaining to the COVID-19 epidemic."

Tomorrow (Monday, March 25th) is the fourth anniversary of the notorious Executive Order by former Governor Andrew Cuomo and his Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker mandating the placement of COVID-positive patients into nursing homes causing the virus to spread like wildfire. Many believe this executive order led to the deaths of over 15,000 of our most vulnerable citizens.

"This executive order impacted many of my constituents including Dan Mathias of Clifton Park, who lost his beloved mother, Doris, to COVID while in a nursing home. The Governor said this so-called 'independent report' on the pandemic response and nursing home deaths would be a year-long review. This should have been due three or four months ago. Where is this report and why hasn't it been released? Hochul has been totally silent on its status and despite her promises to do so, has shown a real lack of transparency. That's why I've filed a freedom of information request to get ahold of her contract with the Olson Group who is doing the policy review and find out what the specific timetable is for delivering the report to the Governor and what, if any, penalties there are for it being late," said Senator Jim Tedisco.

"Four years ago, our state lost 15,000 people in state-regulated nursing homes to the COVID virus – one of the worst natural disasters in the history of our state. Yet there's been little to no policy reflection by our state government about what happened and what can be done to prevent this from reoccurring when a future pandemic strikes. Governor Hochul and her

one-time partner, Governor Cuomo, may wish to forget this devastating tragedy ever happened, but the families who were impacted will not let this go quietly into the night until we have justice and nor will I,” said Senator Tedisco.

“It’s been almost four years since my mother, Doris lost her life to COVID in a Buffalo-area nursing home. We’ve been calling for a bi-partisan investigation with subpoena power to get answers as Senator Tedisco has proposed for some time. Governor Hochul announced near two years ago that she was launching an ‘independent review’ of what happened. Two years later and still we’ve seen nothing. I urge the Governor to comply with Senator Tedisco’s FOIL request, release the contract with the Olson Group, and release their report ASAP!” said Dan Mathias of Clifton Park, who lives in Senator Tedisco’s District.

### **Background:**

**On May 24, 2022**, Governor Hochul announced she had ordered “a wide-ranging and independent review of the state’s policies during the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.” Hochul said:

*q*

*“History deserves to have a true record of what happened here, and I want an outside look at it...I have to be able to leave future governors what was learned, not just in the health care space and the response dealing with nursing homes, but also decisions that affected our economy, decisions that affected families.”*

On November 2, 2022, it was revealed that the Hochul Administration hired an outside firm, **the Olson Group, Ltd, for a \$4.3 million contract** to perform a year-long study with the review originally to begin that month. However, the start of the review apparently was delayed until January 2023. It’s now March 2024, the day before the 4th anniversary of Cuomo’s pandemic executive order and this report remains elusive.

Senator Tedisco has been an outspoken critic of the previous administration's [March 25, 2020 executive order](#) mandating the placement of Covid-positive patients in nursing homes.

[Tedisco joined the Empire Center](#) in successfully suing the Cuomo Administration to get the real number of nursing home deaths publicly released.

Tedisco is the sponsor of bi-partisan legislation for an independent investigation with subpoena power into the nursing home deaths ([S.2419](#)) that has the support of families and loved ones of those who lost their lives in what's become one of the worst disasters in New York State history in terms of loss of life.

---

#### RELATED LEGISLATION

---

### **2023-S2419**

---

- Introduced
  
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Establishes a temporary state commission to study and investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic response on deaths in nursing homes; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof

January 20, 2023

In Senate Committee **Health**

Sponsored by **James Tedisco**

Do you support this bill?