



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Assemblyman Cusick, Senator Lanza Legislation Signed into Law: Home Health Care Workers now Included in Emergency Management Plans

ANDREW J. LANZA October 24, 2017

*“I thank Governor Cuomo for signing this bill into law that will provide vital support for disabled, elderly, hospice and medically fragile home care patients. Including these patients in the local emergency planning process will ensure that our most vulnerable residents are taken care of in an emergency and public disaster. I also want to thank Assemblyman Cusick for his leadership and sponsorship of this important law.” Senator Lanza.*

### **Superstorm Sandy created havoc for patients desperately waiting for care**

Assemblyman Michael Cusick (D - Mid-Island) and Senator Andrew Lanza (R-Staten Island) announced today that legislation they sponsored, A.6549-A/S.5016-A, was signed into law by Governor Cuomo (Chapter 385). The purpose of this bill is to include home health care aids and hospice caregivers among the local parties providing "advice and assistance" into comprehensive emergency plans management plans, including input vital to the care of in-home patients during public emergencies.

In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, home care agencies, nurses, therapists and home health aides played a vital role in response to the disaster, reaching vulnerable patients in need of services, supplies or support with evacuation. However, in many instances these caregivers were unable to reach their patients due to emergency restrictions. In the midst of this

disaster, homebound individuals went without medicine, supplies and basic daily care that they normally received from their nurses and aides. Most were without heat and electricity further exacerbating an already dangerous situation.

This legislation is a common sense measure that seeks to improve such situations in the future by adding home and hospice care agencies to the list of officials and agencies who provide advice and assistance in the preparation of emergency management plans, and as such can both support the responsiveness of the plan and serve as identified and supplemental resources at the direction of local officials and incident commanders who direct and coordinate assets in public emergencies.

“During times of crisis, home care aids are essential in providing critical support to the elderly, disabled and chronically ill patients who are in their care each and every day. I applaud Governor Cuomo for recognizing the importance of this bill and Senator Lanza for his efforts in shepherding this legislation through the Senate because what we saw during and after the storm was complete chaos with scores of home care workers unable to reach their patients. There were roadblocks set up to limit traffic to emergency workers only and gas shortages that delayed their ability to reach those in desperate need of care. Seeing first-hand the critical problems that arose, I want to ensure the safety of my community should another disaster strike,” said Assemblyman Cusick.

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“From Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and countless major snow emergencies across New York, we’ve seen home care and hospice providers ready to serve as a vital resource to assist local emergency managers in reaching vulnerable patients who may be alone or without power at home. These efforts could be substantially enhanced with a greater voice for home care and hospice in the emergency management planning process, including for addressing ‘essential personnel’ status, as this bill does. “Home care and hospice providers applaud Assemblyman Cusick and Senator Lanza for their staunch support of this important bill, and for working vigorously with the Governor’s office to get it signed into law,” said Joanne Cunningham, President Home Care Association of New York State (HCA).

“CCLC is pleased that Governor Cuomo has taken this vital step to ensure the engagement of home care and hospice in local emergency preparedness planning and to call attention to their essential role in providing immediate assistance to chronically ill, frail, and older New Yorkers during and after emergencies and natural disasters,” said Scott Amrhein, President, Continuing Care Leadership Coalition.