



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo: State must continue to focus on nursing homes during COVID-19 pandemic

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 29, 2020

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New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, has reached out to state Department of Health Commissioner Howard Zucker regarding the state's handling of nursing homes during the coronavirus pandemic.

A number of nursing home residents and their families have reached out to Sen. Griffo's office about serious and significant concerns they have regarding these facilities and COVID-19. Sen. Griffo expressed these concerns, which included the mental, emotional and physical effect that lockdowns and a lack of visitation can have on residents, to Commissioner Zucker.

The Senator also urged Commissioner Zucker to prioritize testing, ensure that necessary staffing is available at nursing homes and to expand visitation opportunities, which has been done at hospitals and group homes in the state.

"New York residents have made sacrifices to stop the spread of COVID-19 by not visiting their spouses, parents and grandparents," Sen. Griffo expressed to Commissioner Zucker. "They deserve to have the peace of mind that their loved ones are receiving the care they deserve during this difficult time."

During the current public health crisis, Sen. Griffo has been a strong advocate for nursing home residents and their families. He has continued to bring nursing home-related concerns and issues to the attention of the administration, including calling on the Governor to permit doctors to prescribe potentially life-saving, experimental coronavirus drugs and to stop COVID-19 positive patients from being readmitted to homes where no coronavirus cases exist. While the policy was eventually reversed thanks to the efforts of Sen. Griffo and others, more than 6,000 deaths have occurred in state-regulated nursing homes as a result of COVID-19.

“While I recognize the significant risks and difficult challenges confronting the state as a result of this public health crisis, it is important that we continue to focus on the state’s nursing homes and address the concerns that many have raised,” Sen. Griffo said. “I will continue to advocate on the behalf of the state’s most vulnerable populations, including our nursing home residents. It is important that we continue to work to improve the conditions in these facilities during this pandemic. The residents and their loved ones deserve nothing less.”

Sen. Griffo also continues to push legislation he has previously introduced that would provide for additional comfort, safety and peace of mind for those in a nursing home. The bill (S3786) would allow for allow a patient or their family to have an electronic monitoring device, including Amazon’s Alexa or Google Home, installed in his or her room at the expense of the individual or family. The legislation would provide nursing home residents with another option that can help them to stay connected with loved ones at a time when in-person visitation is not permitted.

The legislation is in the Senate’s Health Committee.