



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

Skoufis to Co-Chair Oversight Hearings on State's COVID-19 Response

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| COMMITTEE: **INVESTIGATIONS AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley), Chairman of the Investigations and Government Operations Committee, will co-chair four hearings on New York State's response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Skoufis' committee, in coordination with the Health and Aging committees, will scrutinize the devastation in our state's nursing homes as well as the challenges our hospitals have faced over the past four months; two nursing home hearings will be held: one focused on downstate and one focused on upstate. The hearings will include testimony from the Governor's Office, nursing home management, hospital stakeholders, frontline workers, and patient family members.

Separately, Skoufis' committee, in coordination with the Labor and Banks committees, will hold a hearing to examine workforce issues, including the unemployment system's failure in rising to meet the moment, PPE distribution, the federal PPP program, and the treatment of employees during the crisis.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, one thing was clear: while our frontline workers were heroically saving lives, communities across the state were under attack from both the virus

as well as bureaucratic dysfunction," **said Senator James Skoufis**. "We owe it to the people of this state to get answers and diligently examine what transpired, both as a means to hold bad-actors accountable as well as learn what worked and what didn't work in preparation for the next public health crisis. When a fire spreads, as this virus did, it's essential to not only put out the fire but also identify who lit the match and understand how the fire fanned out. Working with my colleagues and my investigations team, we will begin the enormous task of unspooling the state's actions from day one. If a second wave of the virus does hit, we must have a comprehensive response in place - anything less would be a dereliction of our duty."

The issues that the hearings are focusing on hit close to home in Skoufis' Senate District. Nursing homes in Orange and Rockland counties, including Valley View Center for Nursing Care, Montgomery Nursing and Rehabilitations Center, Sapphire Nursing and Rehab, and Northern Riverview Health Care Center were all heavily impacted by the virus. Concerns with the Department of Labor include months-long payment delays, private information breaches, and a website that could not host the increased traffic; Skoufis' office alone helped process over 4,000 unemployment claims for constituents who had issues filing with the state.

The hearings, all of which will be conducted remotely via Zoom, are scheduled for the following dates:

-Monday, August 3: Upstate Nursing Homes

-Monday, August 10: Downstate Nursing Homes

-Wednesday, August 12: Hospitals

-Thursday, August 13: Workforce

Those asked to provide testimony will be by invitation only, however, members of the public are welcome to submit written testimony or tips to Senator Skoufis' investigative team at investigations@nysenate.gov.

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