



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daphne Jordan

## Senator Jordan, Senate Republican Colleagues demand Senate Democrats use subpoena power to get answers from Cuomo Administration on nursing home deaths

SENATOR DAPHNE JORDAN July 15, 2020

| ISSUE: **SENIOR CITIZENS, NURSING HOMES, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19**



Albany, NY – NYS Senator Daphne Jordan (R,C,I-Halfmoon), Senate Republican Leader Ortt, and members of the Senate Republican Conference today demanded that the Senate Democratic Majority leverage its subpoena power to compel Governor Andrew Cuomo, Commissioner of Health Dr. Howard Zucker, and any state official with knowledge of the March 25 directive that sent COVID-19 positive patients into nursing homes to testify at

August hearings on coronavirus in “residential health care facilities.” Democrats “inviting” administration officials is inadequate.

After months of silence and inaction, Democrats finally heeded the call to hold hearings, but have yet to harness the Senate’s full investigative powers to deliver answers to thousands of grieving families who lost loved ones at nursing homes, assisted living, and long term care facilities.

“Governor Cuomo’s irresponsible, reckless state mandate that forced nursing homes to accept COVID-19 positive patients led to a deadly virus spreading like wildfire in these facilities, claiming upwards of 6,000 lives, possibly many more. Despite the administration’s shameful efforts to deny their culpability by blaming family members, nursing home staff, and the federal government, or issue a woefully inadequate report, the fact remains it was their foolish mandate that led to these preventable deaths. It’s time that the Senate Democratic Majority stepped up to the plate and joined Senate Republicans in demanding accountability from Governor Cuomo and answers – under oath – about his deadly mandate. Senate Democrats have subpoena power. If they have the political courage to use it and get answers remains the question.” Senator Jordan said.

The virus has hit New York’s nursing homes disproportionately hard, with deaths in the facilities accounting for roughly one-third of overall coronavirus-related deaths in the state. A bombshell report recently showed that the state may be severely underreporting the number of deaths with researchers arguing that the actual number could be roughly

doubled, from about 6,200 to 10,000.

The state has yet to take responsibility for the problems plaguing these facilities throughout the pandemic, and has instead blamed guidance by the CDC— a claim Politifact has labeled ‘mostly false’ — or facility staff for bringing the virus into these vulnerable facilities. Their Department of Health most recently put out its own in-house study to place blame on family members and staff for infecting residents.

In addition, the state has yet to acknowledge the fact that nursing homes throughout New York have continually faced budget cuts, which have resulted in persistent staffing shortages that jeopardize quality of care, a problem only exasperated by the COVID-19 outbreak. Instead of providing additional support to these facilities during this critical time, additional cuts were tucked into this year’s state budget.

On May 6, Senate Republican lawmakers called for an independent investigation of the state’s actions and were the first in the Legislature to call for hearings on May 7. On May 11, Senator Ortt sent a letter to the Chairs of both the Health and Investigations Committee requesting they hold a hearing jointly on these issues, as did Senator Pat Gallivan.

The Senate Majority did not prioritize the hearing on “residential health care facilities,” and scheduled it for August. Democrats, however, have scheduled a hearing on redistricting in 2022 this month.

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