



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

## Senator Gallivan Calls on DOH Officials to Testify About Nursing Home Deaths

JIM RANNEY July 20, 2020

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Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma) is calling on New York State Commissioner of Health Dr. Howard Zucker and other department officials to testify at upcoming legislative hearings on COVID-19 related deaths in nursing homes across the state. Gallivan also joins his Republican colleagues in demanding that the Senate Majority leverage its subpoena power if necessary to compel any state official with knowledge of the March 25 directive that

sent COVID-19 positive patients into nursing homes to testify.

“It is time 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,” Senator Gallivan said. “Those with direct knowledge of the state’s handling of COVID-19 related cases in nursing homes and other adult care facilities have an obligation to explain what happened and to answer questions from the Legislature. If they refuse to testify, we must be prepared to use the Senate’s subpoena power to compel testimony and to obtain documents that will shed light on the department’s policies and procedures related to this pandemic.”

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 report recently showed that the state might 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 any of the problems plaguing Nursing homes and the 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.

Back in May, Senator Gallivan and other members of the Senate Minority called for an independent investigation of the state's actions and were the first in the Legislature to call for hearings.