



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

## “It’s Invite Only (Even for Sitting Legislators) for the Most Important Legislative Hearing in Years”

SENATOR JIM TEDISCO August 2, 2020



Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville) today is calling on the Senate and Assembly Majority Chairs who are running Monday’s joint legislative hearing looking into the deaths of thousands of New Yorkers in state-regulated nursing homes from COVID-19 to allow all legislators who want to directly participate to do so by extending the hearings and compelling the state Health Commissioner to testify for as many days as necessary.

Senator Tedisco and his Republican colleagues were informed on Sunday, the day before the hearing, that only members of the Committees on Aging, Health and Investigations may participate. Rankers will have 5 minutes to ask questions and all other committee members will have just 3 minutes each, making it difficult, if not impossible, for all those legislators who are not allowed to participate to have their questions asked by a member who is on one of the three committees.

Prior to COVID-19 and hearings being held online via Zoom, Senators who were not on a committee that was holding a hearing were routinely allowed to speak and ask questions of those testifying after committee members were given their turn. For instance, last year, Senator Tedisco, who is not a member of the Transportation Committee, participated in a hearing regarding the Schoharie limousine crash, as several of the victims were from his district.

“Thousands of New Yorkers, some of whom are my constituents, have died after contracting COVID-19 while residing at some point in a state-regulated nursing home. Yet a duly-elected state Senator isn’t allowed just three minutes to ask a question at what is perhaps the most important state legislative hearing in years, if not decades! It’s outrageous and a disservice to representative democracy! What should be a bi-partisan and unbiased investigation into what happened that led to the deaths of thousands of New Yorkers in nursing homes now has the aroma of a ‘Cover for Cuomo’ show by the Majority,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

“These hearings should be extended and the Health Commissioner should testify for as long as it takes for all legislators to ask questions on behalf of our constituents so we can give a measure of closure to the loved ones who lost their lives and better prepare for a second wave of the pandemic,” said Senator Tedisco.

“Since I’m not allowed to question the Health Commissioner or his designee in person, I hope one of my colleagues will be able to offer the following question that **I have asked the Governor** and still have not gotten an answer on: **‘Besides the 6,500 people the Health Department reports died in the state’s nursing homes from COVID-19, how many people contracted the virus at a nursing home and then were transported to a hospital or some other facility where they ultimately lost their lives?’**” asked Tedisco.

Senator Tedisco noted that the way this hearing is being run underscores the need, “now, more than ever,” for the legislation ([S.8756/A.10857](#)) he is sponsoring with Democratic Majority Assemblyman Ron Kim (D-Queens) to establish an independent, unbiased and bipartisan investigation with subpoena power to perform a top-to-bottom review of what happened in the state’s nursing homes.