



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate and Assembly GOP conferences hold forum on nursing home crisis: O'Mara renews call for independent investigation (Watch a replay of today's forum)

THOMAS F. O'MARA August 17, 2020

| ISSUE: [COMBATING COVID-19 AND PROTECTING NEW YORKERS](#)



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**Elmira, N.Y., August 17**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) today renewed his call for an independent investigation into how New York's COVID-19 response impacted nursing homes, where at least 6,500 elderly New Yorkers have died over the past several months.

O'Mara renewed his call as the Senate and Assembly Republican conferences held the first of a planned series of forums to receive additional testimony on the nursing home crisis and after joint, bipartisan Senate-Assembly hearings on August 3 and August 10 failed to satisfy many state lawmakers that top Cuomo administration officials are fully answering questions on the crisis.

You can view a replay of today's forum at: <https://www.facebook.com/nysenaterepubs/>.

O'Mara, the top Republican member on the Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee, said, "I and many other legislators, on both sides of the aisle, have called for an independent investigation into this crisis and tragedy since April. The Legislature should be using its subpoena power to get the answers that New Yorkers need and deserve from the Cuomo administration. It becomes difficult this far down the road to simply accept in-house Cuomo administration reports that appear to stonewall and shift the blame from earlier administration actions and guidance. Any Cuomo administration analysis must be examined and verified by an independent investigation. That's what we're trying to achieve. Thousands of lives have been lost and too many questions have been raised, and remain unanswered, to have in-house reports be the final word. An independent investigation, using all of the powers at our disposal, is warranted and necessary for the families who have lost loved ones, the caregivers who put themselves at risk, and to ensure better and safer policies moving forward."

O'Mara currently co-sponsors legislation (S8756) to establish an independent, bipartisan, temporary commission that would be able to issue subpoenas to compel testimony and fully investigate and issue a report on the COVID-19 nursing home crisis – particularly on how state policies and directives impacted the spread of the coronavirus within nursing homes and other residential care facilities.

In May, an in-house DOH report pinned the blame for the COVID-19 crisis in nursing homes on infected staff and downplayed the consequences of a March 25 DOH directive that many point to for having required nursing homes to accept elderly COVID-positive patients being released from hospitals back into their facilities.

Since the state's COVID-19 shutdown began back in March, O'Mara has joined local officials on the front lines of the nursing home crisis in Steuben County and other hot spots around the region and statewide to highlight some of the frustrations at the local level with the response of the Cuomo administration and overall state policies.