



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## Senator Serino Joins Bi-Partisan Event Calling for Independent Investigation of Nursing Home Deaths

SUSAN SERINO August 19, 2020

| ISSUE: **COMBATING COVID-19 AND PROTECTING NEW YORKERS; PROTECTING NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**



ALBANY, NY—Senator Sue Serino (R, C, I-Hyde Park) today joined Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville), Majority Democratic Assemblyman Ron Kim (D-Queens), and Fox News Senior Meteorologist Janice Dean—who lost her in-laws who were residents of state-regulated elder care facilities to the coronavirus—at a press conference to call for passage of legislation to establish an independent, bi-partisan state commission to fully investigate the deaths of

thousands of New Yorkers who died from COVID-19 in nursing homes.

The bill, introduced by Senator Tedisco and Assemblyman Kim, and cosponsored by Serino ([S.8756/A.10857](#)), would establish an independent, bi-partisan commission with subpoena power to perform a top-to-bottom review of what happened in the state's nursing homes during the pandemic. The legislation aims to get answers for the families of those who lost their loved ones and ensure the state is better prepared for a second wave of the pandemic.

Specifically, the bill requires that the bi-partisan commission to investigate the nursing home deaths would consist of five members: one each appointed by the Senate Majority Leader, Senate Minority Leader, Assembly Speaker and Assembly Minority Leader, and be chaired by an appointee of the New York State Attorney General. The bill expressly requires that each appointee have expertise in health care and health care policy issues. The bill also establishes that the Commission members would not be paid and they would give it the subpoena power it needs to access critically important evidence of the state's handling of this issue. The legislation also requires that a report be publicly issued and sent to the Legislature that includes its findings and as well as recommendations for best practices for the future.

“Through its inaction, the Legislature has been complicit in allowing bad state policy to put the most vulnerable in harm's way. By failing to leverage its subpoena power to compel state officials to testify at its recent hearings, the Legislature only added insult to injury. Now, more than ever, we need a truly independent, non-partisan investigation into the state mishandling of the crisis in these facilities. These residents and their loved ones deserve answers, they deserve accountability and most importantly, they deserve a better path forward. We will not stop fighting to protect these vulnerable New Yorkers, and support those who care for them,” **said Senator Sue Serino (R,C,I-Hyde Park), Ranking Member of the Senate Aging Committee.**

“Some issues transcend partisan politics. The families of the thousands of New Yorkers who lost their lives from COVID-19 while in state-regulated nursing homes deserve a measure of closure and we need to help prepare for a second wave of the virus or a future pandemic. After several legislative hearings, it’s clear we need an independent, unbiased and bi-partisan investigation with subpoena power to help us get answers to find out how many people really died from the virus, why did it get so bad in our nursing homes and what steps need to be taken in order to prevent this from happening again,” **said Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville)**. “I want to thank Assemblyman Ron Kim for his leadership on this issue and thank all my colleagues from both sides of the aisle who have sponsored this bill. I especially want to thank Janice Dean for taking the time out of her extremely busy schedule to come to Albany and share the powerful story of her family’s terrible loss and her efforts to make a positive difference to help us get answers and save lives in the future.”

“Over these past few months, I have been deeply affected by the stories of lives lost during the nursing home crisis. That is why I am calling for this independent investigation. Governor Cuomo argued against an investigation because ‘nobody can agree on who an independent expert is.’ The only criteria we are looking for is experts that are independent from him. It is no coincidence that the ‘experts’ who authored the Department of Health report on this issue exonerated him from his fatal decision of sending COVID-19 patients back to nursing homes, have strong ties to his administration, and have benefited from his policies and contracts. We would be failing these families if we didn’t come together to demand the truth,” **said Assemblyman Ron Kim (D-Queens)**.

“I am grateful and honored to be part of this call for the passage of bi-partisan legislation for an independent investigation with Senator Tedisco and Assemblyman Kim this week. It’s the stories of the families who have experienced greatest loss in this pandemic – that can help us uncover what really happened,” **said Janice Dean, Fox News Senior Meteorologist, who lost both her in-laws to COVID-19 while residing in state-regulated elder care facilities.**

Senate Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo (R, C, I—Rome), Senator Daphne Jordan (R, C, I-Halfmoon), Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara (D, C, I-Rotterdam) and Assemblymember Mary Beth Walsh (R, C, I-Ballston) also spoke at the press event in support of the bill.

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RELATED LEGISLATION

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## **2019-S8756**

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- Introduced
  
- ◦ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ◦ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor

- Establishes a temporary state commission to study and investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic response on deaths in nursing homes; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof

July 14, 2020

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [James Tedisco](#)

Do you support this bill?