



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO SLAMS HEALTH HEARING DELAY; URGES SENATE TO LEVERAGE SUBPOENA POWER IMMEDIATELY

SUSAN SERINO January 27, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19, CORONAVIRUS; COVID-19; SENIORS; NURSING HOMES; ADULT CARE FACILITIES**



HYDE PARK, NY—Senator Sue Serino today is speaking out following news that the Joint Legislative State Budget Hearing on Health was postponed after news broke that lawmakers would use the hearing to seek answers on COVID-related deaths in nursing homes.

The hearing, which was originally scheduled for next Wednesday, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, has been delayed until February 25<sup>th</sup>.

Serino is urging her colleagues in the NYS Senate Majority who have subpoena power to exercise it immediately to compel the state to produce the long-awaited data.

*“Enough is enough,” said Senator Serino. “The State has proven time and again that it has no intention of freely releasing the real number of New Yorkers who died from COVID-19 in our nursing homes. Empty threats only lead to more delays. Those with the power to compel the state to provide this data have a duty to use it. Now is the time to actually leverage the full power of the Legislature, and I am urging my colleagues who have the ability to issue a subpoena and compel the state to release this data to use that power now. These vulnerable New Yorkers, and those who lost loved ones, deserve answers and we are not going to stop pushing until we get them.”*

Serino and her colleagues have been pushing for a subpoena to be issued even before the August 3<sup>rd</sup> Legislative hearing, at which the NYS Health Commissioner appeared and promised to release this critically important data. To date, the state has only released the number of New Yorkers who passed as a result of COVID if they did so while still in their nursing home. It has not released the number of New Yorkers who contracted COVID-19 in a nursing home, but later passed in a hospital. Public health officials argue that as a result, New York could be drastically underreporting the number of COVID-related deaths in these facilities. To date, there have been nearly 9,000 COVID deaths reported in New York’s nursing homes, but experts say the real number could be as much as doubled.

News outlets and independent organizations alike have filed Freedom Of Information Law (FOIL) requests with the state to get access to these numbers, **but the state has continued to deny and delay these requests**. Despite having the clear authority in law as Committee Chairs to issue a subpoena to compel the state to reveal this data, **past calls** from Serino and **her colleagues** for the lawmakers to leverage this power have gone ignored.

Serino serves as the Ranking Member of the NYS Senate’s Aging Committee and a member of the State’s Finance Committee.