



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Column: Nursing Home Residents and Families Deserve Better

PAMELA HELMING January 29, 2021

I am sickened by the findings of the Attorney General's report on COVID nursing home deaths, as are so many families who have contacted me since it was released.

We need the facts. There should be a full investigation. And leaders should be held accountable for failing to protect our nursing home residents and staff.

While this investigation continues, we must not lose sight of our immediate responsibility to help our seniors living in nursing homes and long-term care facilities. Residents are still dying from COVID. Others are succumbing to loneliness and isolation. They need their families and their families need them.

The pandemic has highlighted the extreme challenges that our nursing homes and staff face each day in providing the best possible care to our seniors – whether it's staffing levels, PPE, vaccinations, or the severe health impacts of separation from their loved ones.

These problems are now even more transparent to the public. It is our responsibility to find solutions. To work with our nursing homes, not against them. To support our staff and caregivers, not make their jobs harder. And most important, to ensure our seniors receive the care, love and compassion they desperately need and deserve. We should all be united in achieving these goals.

The ongoing investigation will reveal more. And I will continue to push our state's leaders for full transparency and accountability. But my focus will also be on protecting our seniors. Setting up safe visitation between residents and families. Speeding up vaccinations. And seeking long-term solutions to address the staffing issues and other challenges at nearly every residential facility in the state.

I recently lost two close friends in nursing homes, and I worry about my other friends and their loved ones every day. New York State has failed our seniors and their families. We can do better and I am determined that we will.