



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO RESPONDS TO GOVERNOR'S LATEST NURSING HOME COMMENTS

SUSAN SERINO February 19, 2021

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HYDE PARK, NY— Senator Sue Serino released the statement below following today's press conference in which the Governor once again defended his handling of the COVID crisis in New York's nursing homes:

"Nothing could be more cruel than repeatedly refusing to apologize to the vulnerable residents and their loved ones for the state's mishandling of the COVID crisis in our nursing homes. Making veiled threats—implying lawmakers are liars for doing their jobs to push for transparency and improved policies—is a new low. I have said from the start that for me, this has always been about the very real

people who have been impacted and correcting any mistakes to save lives. The people who brought politics into this discussion were members of the Governor's own Administration in a secret meeting held with members of the Legislature's Supermajority.

The Governor said today that nursing homes must be prepared for the next pandemic and presented a slide with a number of recommendations. Last spring, I made these same recommendations so that these facilities could be prepared for the current pandemic, and they went ignored. This is why I have been relentless in calling for a full, independent investigation into the state's overall handling of the COVID crisis in our nursing homes since last spring. The state's missteps seem to go far beyond the March 25th order and the withholding of data. These facilities have been treated as an afterthought by the state since day one, and I will not stop working tirelessly to ensure the residents, their loved ones, and the staff who care for them are given the priority they deserved from the beginning."

Senator Serino has been leading the fight for an independent investigation **since May**. In April, she put forward a **comprehensive plan** to better protect nursing home residents that would have included the creation of specialty care centers or step down facilities to keep COVID-positive patients out of these vulnerable facilities. In May, **she also put forward an amendment** that would have dedicated \$100 million in then unused CARES Act funding to nursing homes, assisted living, and adult care facilities to fund the purchase of testing supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as to train and hire desperately needed additional staff. The amendment was rejected outright by the Supermajority when it was brought to the floor for a vote.

On today's announcement that visitation will be resumed, Senator Serino said, *"We heard extensive testimony from loved ones, facility staff, and experts who discussed the very real dangers of 'failure to thrive' and isolation. I know that resuming visitation will be welcome news for families across New York who have longed to reconnect with their loved ones. The state must take every single precaution necessary to ensure this is done safely to protect residents and ensure families are not shut out again."*

Senator Serino **had been advocating for rapid testing to be prioritized for these facilities for months to protect residents and help reconnect loved ones.**

Senator Serino is the Ranking Member of the Senate's Aging Committee.

