



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo urges changes to nursing home industry

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO February 22, 2021

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Following the recent announcement that visitation at nursing homes would be reestablished, state Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, today continued his call for needed changes and reforms to the nursing home industry that he believes would help residents and their families during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond.

“The state Department of Health will be issuing guidance that will allow for direct interaction between families and residents provided appropriate safety measures such as masks and coronavirus tests are utilized,” Sen. Griffo said. “It is imperative that nursing homes accommodate this change and figure out ways to make it work and ensure that it works. People in these facilities have not only died from COVID-19 but from a failure to thrive and isolation as a result of the policies put in place by the Governor and his administration. This has to end now. There should be no more visits where loved ones are behind barriers and denial of daily access to visitation.”

Besides advocating for expanded visitation since the start of the pandemic, Sen. Griffo also has recommended:

- The implementation of a program that would allow families to designate individuals as essential caregivers who would provide essential care to those in residential health care

facilities. Sen. Griffo has introduced a bill (S3879) that would residents to designate a primary, secondary and alternate caregiver to assist them with their non-medical needs.

- Allowing nursing home residents or their families to install a connected device such as Amazon Alexa or Google Home, or a more traditional means of monitoring, in a resident's room. Legislation (S3821) Sen. Griffo has introduced would allow families to stay connected to their loved ones and ensure that they are receiving the proper care that they deserve.
- Expanding and enhancing ombudsmen programs at nursing homes and other facilities.
- The monthly personal needs allowance that individuals in nursing homes are allowed to keep for their own expenses should be increased. Sen. Griffo has continued to advocate for such a change and has sponsored legislation would up the existing personal needs allowance for individuals in nursing homes.
- More regular, as well as random, inspections of nursing homes to ensure that facilities are providing proper services and essential care to residents.

"COVID-19 has certainly exacerbated issues affecting residential care facilities, and there is no doubt that the nursing home industry needs a complete overhaul," Sen. Griffo said. "My recommendations are a good place to start. Everything, including employee training, compensation for staff and hiring practices, must be reviewed to ensure that nursing home residents get the care they need and deserve. Additionally, we need an independent investigation to look into the state of our nursing homes and legislative hearings to discuss not just pandemic-related issues but the industry as a whole."

The state Senate is expected to consider a number of bills related to nursing homes this week with subjects including:

- Requiring the publication of nursing home ratings.
- Creating a long-term care task force.
- Providing opportunities for volunteers to work as resident advocates within the long-term care ombudsman program.
- Establishing procedures for the designation of personal caregiving visitors.
- Implementing an infection inspection audit and checklist.
- Providing information on where a list of violations and other actions taken against a facility can be found.
- Including quality improvement committees and facilities' quality assurance plans.
- Establishing a direct patient care ratio reporting and rebate requirement for nursing homes.
- Increasing transparency in the establishment of nursing home facilities and in the contractual ownership relationships of operators.
- Requiring the Health Department to update its regular report of Nursing Home and Adult Care Facility COVID Related Deaths Statewide to include confirmed or presumed positive cases related to residents who were transferred from nursing home or adult care facilities to a hospital and who died in a hospital retroactive to March 1, 2020.
- Establishing requirements for transfers, discharges and voluntary discharges from residential health care facilities.

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