



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO LEADS EFFORT TO DESIGNATE MARCH 25th ‘WE CARE’ REMEMBRANCE DAY

SUSAN SERINO March 25, 2021

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ALBANY, NY—On the one-year anniversary of the state’s notorious order that sent COVID-positive patients directly into New York’s nursing homes, Senator Sue Serino today brought lawmakers, advocates, and loved ones together for a memorial event outside the State Capitol. In an effort to honor the lives and legacies of the 15,000+ facility residents who have died from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, Senator Sue Serino announced the introduction of a resolution designating March 25<sup>th</sup> as ‘We Care’ Remembrance Day.

While the Governor's Administration contends that the state's guidance had **no impact on the rate of COVID infections** in these facilities, **data suggests otherwise**, and to date, the Legislature has consistently failed to take any meaningful steps to fully investigate the state's handling of the COVID crisis in these facilities. While the Governor arrogantly asked, '**Who Cares?**' when news broke that his Administration had significantly undercounted deaths in these facilities, event attendees made it clear that they care very much about the legacies of these New Yorkers as they reaffirmed their commitment to pushing for answers for grieving families.

In that vein, Senator Serino and her colleagues penned a letter to NYS Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, joining advocacy group Voices for Seniors, in urging him to leverage his power to issue a 'referral' to the Attorney General that would allow them to commence a more thorough investigation into state actions.

*"For too many New York families, March 25<sup>th</sup> is a day that forever changed their lives," said Senator Serino, Ranking Member of the State Senate's Aging Committee. "We pause today to honor the legacies of the 15000+ nursing home and residential healthcare facility residents who were lost to COVID-19. These residents were so much more than numbers on a state spreadsheet. These were real people, with real lives, whose deaths should not be in vain. It is in their memory that we continue the fight for justice, and for better policies to ensure that no one else ever has to suffer the way these families have. It is our hope that this day will serve as a permanent reminder of the need to always protect our most vulnerable."*

*"One year ago, Governor Cuomo gave the green light to the deadly directive that would ultimately cost thousands of our seniors in nursing homes their lives," said Senate Republican Leader Robert Ort. "We are here today to honor the memory of those who were lost, to show our continued support for their loved ones who demand answers, and to promise all New Yorkers that we will continue to fight until Governor Cuomo and his administration are held accountable for their actions."*

*"The marking of this day, March 25<sup>th</sup>, has sadly and tragically become a new 'day of infamy' in New York State to reflect on the day exactly one year ago today when Governor Cuomo issued an executive order mandating COVID-positive patients be placed into nursing homes and to remember the 15,000 lives lost*

to the virus. We remember that every life lost was more than just a statistic, these individuals were someone's spouse, parent, grandparent and sibling and they deserve justice. This day should be set aside moving forward as a day of solemn reflection in New York State for all those souls who needlessly lost their lives," **said Senator Jim Tedisco.**

"We have to ensure the protection and safety of all our seniors, particularly those in nursing homes and long-term care. Thank you to Senator Serino for her tireless advocacy. We share a commitment to getting answers for families and ensuring that their loved ones are treated with respect and dignity. We have a duty and obligation to get to bottom of what happened last March, hold those who broke laws accountable and ensure that this never happens again," **said Senator Pam Helming.**

"Voices For Seniors has been at the forefront fighting for accountability for the 15,000 plus lives put in direct harm's way by Governor Cuomo's March 25th executive order. Thousands of families are still trying to pick up the pieces after the fire consumed the dry grass and we will continue to pursue the truth and advocate for the safeguards our seniors rightly deserve," **said Vivian Zayas, Co-Founder - Voices For Seniors**

"Gov. Cuomo and his staff who wrote this March 25th mandate need to be held accountable for the thousands who died in nursing homes. Too many were complicit in these deaths. It is so important to have this 'We Care' Remembrance Day so these lives are not forgotten and this never happens again," **-Phil Minissale, Cindy Lizzi and Ted Minissale**

"I am here today to honor the memory of my parents William and Hilda Durr. They died alone... our family struggles to have closure, to mourn and to accept that we couldn't be with them when they needed us the most. Their COVID burial was heartless. What should have been attended by many was attended by few. Gov. Cuomo did you count them in?" **asked Mary Ann Boniello.**

"My mother, Doris, lived independently until 2018 when she moved into a nursing home in the Buffalo area. When COVID-19 hit last March, we got the call that nursing homes were being shut down to visitors. Several weeks later, one of the patients there tested positive. They tested all the other patients and my mother was negative. Around May 6<sup>th</sup>, my mother unfortunately contracted COVID-19, and by May 17<sup>th</sup> she succumbed to it. I've shared my family's experience with Senator Jim Tedisco and thank him and his Senate Republican colleagues for being out-front on this issue seeking a bi-partisan investigation with subpoena power to get answers so something like this never happens again," **said Dan Mathias of Clifton Park, who lives in Senator Tedisco's District.**

In an effort to continue raising awareness, Senator Serino has asked New Yorkers to light a candle this evening in honor of the 15000+ and post a picture of it on their social media along with #WeCare and #15000PLUS.

A copy of the letter sent by the Senate Republican Conference to Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, as well as a copy of the proposed Resolution, are attached.

To watch the event in full, please [click here](#).