



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mike Martucci

Senator Martucci Blasts Format of Disabilities "Roundtable," Calls Out OPWDD

MIKE MARTUCCI May 20, 2021

| ISSUE: **OPWDD**



Despite New Guidance, Order Requiring Group Homes to Accept COVID-Positive Residents Not Rescinded

** "Roundtable" to begin at 1 p.m. in Albany. The press can watch via the NYS Senate Website:

[nysenate.gov](https://www.nysenate.gov) **

ALBANY NY – Senator Mike Martucci, Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Disabilities criticized the format of today's roundtable discussion held by the Disabilities Committee

and laid out the questions OPWDD Commissioner Kastner must answer in order to fully address his deadly order of April 10, 2020.

“Let’s be clear, the Senate Majority has the power and the responsibility to hold hearings and issue subpoenas to provide necessary and proper oversight of the Governor and his Commissioners,” **said Senator Martucci.** “Today’s roundtable was a sad cop-out and an abdication of that responsibility.”

Despite Senator Martucci’s requests, the Chairman of the Disabilities Committee chose a roundtable discussion instead of a formal hearing. Further, the inclusion of other issues—while important—is inappropriate and serves to merely water down justifiable criticism of OPWDD

“On April 10, 2020, OPWDD issued an order eerily similar to the one issued by DOH which contributed to the deaths of 15,000 seniors. That OPWDD order helped make our most vulnerable citizens less safe. People residing in group homes were three times more likely to die of COVID than the general public. This represented a 459% increase over 2019. Despite the proliferation of the vaccine and new guidance on this and other matters, OPWDD has still failed to rescind this order or to provide any communications between them, DOH and Governor Cuomo. This is outrageous and the public deserves answers,” **said Martucci.**

Senator Martucci plans to ask Commissioner Kastner the following questions and hold him and the Department fully accountable for both their actions and their inaction.

KEY QUESTIONS KASTNER & CUOMO MUST ANSWER

1. Why did Commissioner Kastner issue an order on April 10 that required the readmission or admission of COVID-positive residents to certified residential facilities?

2. Why has he refused to rescind it—even today—when we know of its awful impact? Consider, there was a 459% increase in deaths at group homes in April 2020 compared to April 2019, and individuals in group homes were three times more likely to be infected and to die from COVID than the general population.

3. What communications did Commissioner Kastner and his Department have with Governor Cuomo and his senior aides, Commissioner Zucker, or anyone else in the Cuomo administration about this order? Why has he utterly refused to provide those communications to me or to this committee? I want to know, what did he know and when did he know it, and more importantly, what role did Governor Cuomo—who we know covered up the deaths of 15,000 elderly people in nursing homes—play in this decision making?

Mike Martucci is serving his first term as the Senator for New York's 42nd State Senate District which comprises all of Sullivan County and parts of Orange, Ulster, and Delaware counties. He is the Ranking Member of the Senate Standing Committees on Disabilities and Commerce, Economic Development And Small Business.

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