



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO VOTES AGAINST CONFIRMING NEW HEALTH COMMISSIONER

SUSAN SERINO January 20, 2022

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC; COVID-19: NURSING HOMES; HEALTH COMMISSIONER**



ALBANY, NY – After a tense exchange during the Senate Finance Committee meeting yesterday, where New York’s new Health Commissioner, Dr. Mary Bassett, announced she would not review the state’s past pandemic policies as they relate to nursing homes, Senator Sue Serino today rose to speak in opposition to her confirmation to the post.

“I went into the Finance Committee yesterday with high hopes that we would hear from a new Health Commissioner with a fresh perspective, an open mind, and a desire to right the wrongs of the past

Administration,” said Senator Serino from the Senate Chamber.

“Instead, I was totally disturbed to hear Dr. Bassett answer that she has made the decision not to look back, or in her words, “unravel” what happened with the former Administration in regards to the State’s pandemic response in nursing homes. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past, and that starts by ‘unraveling’ exactly what went wrong,” Senator Serino continued. “To have accepted this job without even having read the most controversial order of the pandemic—as she claimed during the committee meeting yesterday—defies logic.

“For too many New York families who were impacted by the State’s horrible pandemic policies, they don’t have the luxury of ‘not looking back.’ Too many of them are reliving their nightmare every day, and they are desperately seeking answers and closure. I understand Dr. Bassett’s desire to look forward and move into the future. We all share that desire. But in order to do that effectively—as all scientists know—we have a duty to evaluate and learn from past practices. I hope that Dr. Bassett reconsiders her response and her stance on this, but due to her opposition to taking this basic step, I’ll be voting no on her nomination today.”

During the Finance Committee Meeting, when asked by Senator Jim Tedisco what Dr. Bassett may have learned from the policies of the past administration, she answered in part that she has made the decision not to “unravel what had happened in the nursing homes under the previous commissioner.”

When Senator Serino followed up seeking clarification on her comments, Dr. Bassett claimed to have not read the notorious March 25th Order that required nursing homes to admit COVID-positive patients and prohibited them from testing those patients—a document that is only one page in length. Dr. Bassett then doubled down on her comments saying, “As I said, whether you agree or not, I just want to be clear that I decided not to look back.”

Senator Serino concluded her comments in the Chamber by reminding the Commissioner of the very real human impact these policies had on thousand of New Yorkers saying, “*I can only hope Dr. Bassett finds it in her heart to do right by these families, and by the healthcare heroes who put their lives on the line and were the ones who held the hands of residents and comforted them as they took their last breath after the state shut families out.*”

To view the exchange from the Senate Finance Committee meeting, [click here](#).

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