



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham Urges NY's COVID-19 Phone Info be Offered in Spanish

PETE HARCKHAM March 24, 2020

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New York State Senator Pete Harckham urged today that information be offered in both English and Spanish on New York State Department of Health's phone hotline number for questions and issues regarding the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Nearly 15 percent of residents of New York live in households in which Spanish is spoken at home, and in Westchester, the percentage county-wide is about 25 percent.

"I'm concerned that some New Yorkers are calling the hotline and not receiving the information they need because of a language barrier," Harckham said. "Perhaps the state's

Department of Health can set up hotlines in a number of languages, which can be sent to community groups and put out on social media.”

“We need to ensure that vitally important information is communicated to all of our residents regarding coronavirus precautions, testing and treatment,” noted Harckham. “The hotline that has been set up to receive calls about the virus, though, only offers information and directions now in English, which is a disservice to too many New Yorkers who may not understand English well enough or at all. This needs to be remedied as soon as possible, especially when you consider that lives are at stake.”

The Department of Health’s website page conveying information about the coronavirus actually includes a function that allows visitors to receive the information in 110 different languages. The hotline number, 1-888-364-3065, includes a greeting and several different prompts for information that are available in just one language—English.