



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO SUBMITS FORMAL FOIL REQUEST TO CUOMO ADMINISTRATION FOR FULL TRANSCRIPT OF SECRET MEETING

SUSAN SERINO February 15, 2021

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS; COVID-19; SENIORS; NURSING HOMES; ADULT CARE FACILITIES**



HYDE PARK, NY—Senator Sue Serino, Ranking Member of the NYS Senate Aging Committee, today submitted a Freedom of Information (FOIL) request to the Governor's Administration for a full transcript and recording of the secret meeting held between top members of the Administration and members of the Senate Majority regarding the months-long cover-up of COVID-19 nursing home deaths. Senator Serino's formal request was

submitted as New Yorkers learned of a Democratic Conference held over the past weekend in which members of the Senate Majority discussed holding off on stripping Governor Cuomo's emergency powers as a political maneuver to influence the state budget negotiations.

[The New York Daily News reported on the Senate Majority discussions](#), indicating that Senators would rather use the threat of revoking the Governor's emergency authority not as a means of addressing immediate public health concerns, but rather as a political bargaining chip, writing that "some in the majority said it would be better to hold off on acting until budget negotiations begin."

"I was absolutely disgusted to read that some members of the Legislature's Supermajority are trying to use the state's nursing home scandal as 'leverage' in the State Budget process. These vulnerable residents and their loved ones are real people, not political bargaining chips and they deserve better," said Senator Serino. "Our Conference has been adamant from day one that New Yorkers deserve transparency and truth, yet still, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle choose to shamefully operate behind closed doors. This news speaks volumes and helps to explain why they Supermajority has repeatedly failed to use its power to get to the bottom of this crisis. If true, these lawmakers are complicit in the cover-up that has put these vulnerable residents in harm's way for too long and must be held accountable."

The Senator's formal letter under the Freedom of Information Law requested a full transcript or recording of the February 10, 2021 meeting held between members of the Governor's Administration, including Secretary to the Governor Melissa DeRosa, officials of the Department of Health including Dr. Howard Zucker and members of the legislature, including Senator Rachel May, Senator Gustavo Rivera, Senator James Skoufis, Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, Assemblyman John McDonald and Assemblyman Ron Kim. To date, the Cuomo Administration has only released a partial transcript of this meeting.

Under New York State's Freedom of Information Law, Article 6 of the Public Officers Law, agencies are required to provide a response within five business days from receipt of request.

On Saturday, Serino released a statement and sent a letter to the Governor requesting a voluntary release of the full transcript or any recordings saying in part, *“This meeting should never have been held behind closed doors to begin with...Second to a public apology, releasing a full transcript or recording of the meeting is the least the Administration can do to begin doing right by the thousands of New Yorkers who lost loved ones in these facilities.”*

Last week, Senate Republicans called on the Majority to immediately convene a Special Session to revoke the Governor’s emergency powers and reiterated the urgent need for an independent investigation by the Department of Justice and New York State Attorney General to hold everyone involved in this cover-up accountable. The Majority has failed to join these calls.

The Minority Conference, led by Senator Serino and Senator Tom O’Mara, have also called on Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins to strip Senators Skoufis and May of their committee chairmanships pending a full, independent investigation of their involvement in this cover-up after both Senators refused to consider motions brought before their committees which would have helped launch an investigation into the crisis. The Majority has failed to respond to these requests.