



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara says Cuomo administration testimony reinforces need for independent investigation on nursing homes

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 25, 2021

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**Albany, N.Y., February 26**—Following testimony yesterday by state Health Commissioner Howard Zucker at a virtual legislative budget hearing, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) renewed the call for an independent investigation into the Cuomo administration's

handling of the COVID-19 response in nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

Yesterday's daylong hearing by the Senate Finance Committee and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, the last of 13 budget hearings conducted by the committees, focused on Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposed 2021-2022 state budget for health. O'Mara and many other lawmakers took the opportunity to question Zucker on the nursing homes crisis.

O'Mara, the Ranking Member on the Senate Finance Committee, said, "It is clear that the Cuomo administration is in full damage control mode on the nursing homes cover-up. Governor Cuomo, Dr. Zucker, and their inner circle have a story, they're sticking to it and they want their version of this tragedy to be the final word. Their story is that they did everything right and wouldn't change a thing. That will not be the final word on this tragedy. They have stonewalled the Legislature, stonewalled government watchdogs, stonewalled reporters and, today, there was simply not enough time to fully interrogate and question them about their actions. Someone's not telling the truth here and all of the indicator lights point to the Cuomo inner circle. The only way now to determine the truth is through a team of independent investigators that will subpoena all of the emails, phone calls and other records, and then compel testimony from across the Cuomo administration."

Under questioning by O'Mara, Zucker, repeatedly citing an ongoing investigation, refused to answer who within the Cuomo administration ordered that nursing homes data be withheld from the Legislature and the public, what information has been provided to the federal Department of Justice, or whether he or anyone else within the Health Department has been subpoenaed for information or to appear before a grand jury.

Watch Senator O'Mara's line of questioning [HERE](#).

Find a video archive of yesterday's hearing [HERE](#) (Note: Commissioner Zucker's testimony begins at approximately the 2:05:15 mark of the hearing).