



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara joins colleagues, families at Capitol for 'We Care Remembrance Day' ceremony: Gathering marks two-year anniversary of fateful state order requiring nursing homes to accept COVID-positive patients

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Albany, N.Y., March 23—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) joined Senate and Assembly colleagues at the Capitol this morning, along with family members who lost loved ones to COVID-19 in nursing homes, for a “We Care Remembrance Day” ceremony honoring the lives of the more than 15,000 seniors who died.

The group is also calling for the approval of legislation O'Mara will co-sponsor to forever mark March 25th as “We Care Remembrance Day” in New York State, as well as legislation (S2067/A3162) he co-sponsors to establish a temporary state commission to investigate the COVID-19 response in nursing homes.

Legislators and family members noted that this Friday will mark two years since former Governor Andrew Cuomo issued a fateful directive requiring New York State nursing homes to accept COVID-positive patients from hospitals back into the homes and, additionally, prevented nursing homes from testing incoming residents for COVID-19.

According to numerous investigative reports over the past two years, Cuomo's March 25, 2020 mandate, which the administration finally rescinded in May 2020, resulted in more than 9,000 COVID-positive patients being sent back into nursing homes from hospitals, 6,000 of whom were new admissions, not readmissions – a number more than 40% higher than what the Cuomo administration had been reporting.

O'Mara, who serves as the Ranking Member on the Senate Investigations Committee, has repeatedly called for Senate investigations and other actions to further examine and determine the full extent of the nursing homes cover-up.

"For too long the Cuomo stonewalling and cover-ups on this nursing homes tragedy and many aspects of New York's COVID-19 response were unacceptable, and it continues aided and abetted by the Legislature's inaction. Former Governor Cuomo tried to conceal the truth on the devastation of this crisis in our nursing homes and in other places, and it has caused great harm. Governor Hochul and the current health department show no signs of wanting to uncover the truth despite reports that keep forcefully exposing the lies, cover-ups, and crimes," said O'Mara, highlighting last week's audit from state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli that the DOH under Cuomo underreported COVID-19-related deaths by at least 4,100 and by more than 50% during the pandemic. "These families deserve accountability and justice. The lives of these seniors must be remembered. At the very least, we have an obligation and a responsibility to ensure that this never happens again and that New York State is prepared to better protect seniors in nursing homes in the future."