



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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SERINO RESPONDS TO NEWS OF PENDING PANDEMIC REVIEW: ENOUGH TALK, TIME FOR ACTION

SUSAN SERINO May 24, 2022

| ISSUE: [COVID-19 PANDEMIC](#), [COVID-19 NURSING HOME DEATHS](#); [INVESTIGATION](#)



ALBANY, NY— Senator Sue Serino today released the following statement in response to news that Governor Kathy Hochul has said publicly that the state will bring on independent consultants to take an objective look at the State’s response to the pandemic, including nursing home deaths:

“The families who have lost their loved ones to this crisis deserve real answers and accountability, not lip service. While I hope this announcement actually materializes, Governor Hochul has been in office since

August, and months have gone by with no real action from her Administration on this issue. In fact, her own Health Commissioner *said during her confirmation hearing* that she would not look back, so if an independent body is appointed to undergo this review, they need to be empowered to access the information they need to provide truthful results and *cannot be stonewalled* by the Department of Health or any other entity.

In April, a New York Times article mentioned that Governor Hochul convened commissioners and other top officials and tasked them with doing a deep dive into the State's COVID response. I submitted *a letter* and a FOIL request for that report, and to date, I have yet to receive it. While we all share a desire to move forward from the pandemic, we cannot do that until we have the courage to look back, learn what went right, what went wrong and make changes to ensure deadly mistakes are never repeated."

A report released this week by LoHud highlights again the urgency behind undergoing such a review. According to the report, over 35,000 nursing home complaints flooded New York State during the pandemic, and about 96% of those claims were deemed unsubstantiated or unresolved. With the Long Term Care Ombudsman, family and visitors shut out of nursing homes in the early days of the pandemic, Senator Serino *introduced legislation to ensure that such complaints were received, reviewed and acted upon immediately*, however the state took no action to advance the idea.

"It is totally unacceptable and negligent on the part of the state to have allowed complaints related to the health and safety of vulnerable New Yorkers to languish during such a critical time," said Senator Serino. "These are thousands of calls for help that went unanswered, and I will be seeking an immediate investigation into this lack of action and oversight. Now, more than ever, we must redouble our efforts to get the answers and accountability that impacted families and all New Yorkers deserve."

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