

THE SENATE  
STATE OF NEW YORK

**RANKING MINORITY MEMBER**  
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
AND SMALL BUSINESS  
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION  
ON RURAL RESOURCES



**SENATOR**  
**PAMELA A. HELMING**  
**54TH DISTRICT**

**COMMITTEES**  
AGRICULTURE  
HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
RACING, GAMING AND WAGERING

July 6, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12248

Dr. Howard A. Zucker, Commissioner  
NYS Department of Health  
Corning Tower  
Empire State Plaza,  
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Zucker:

I write to remind you that it has been four months since nursing homes have halted visitation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is four months that nursing home residents and their families and other loved ones have gone without seeing each other. This is having an acute impact on the mental health and overall wellbeing of both residents and their loved ones.

As New York reopens, nursing homes remain closed, with many of these residents sitting in isolation and some in confusion as to why they cannot see their loved ones. The safety of our state's residents should be our number one priority. However, transparency must also remain a priority.

Throughout the course of this pandemic, metrics and phases have been set to guide our state's reopening plan. However, there is no guidance as to when nursing homes will resume visitation and little information has been made publicly available on this important topic, creating confusion and anxiety.

Members of the Legislature have called for nursing homes to be able to independently take responsibility for drafting safe visitation plans, yet no guidance from DOH has been forthcoming. Some facilities have had no cases of COVID-19 and are located in lower risk areas, yet they still are not allowed to facilitate patient visits.

I strongly urge you to provide the scientific data and benchmarks that are required for a facility to reopen. Businesses, hospitals, schools and many other entities have been encouraged to adopt

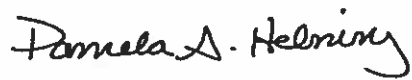
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plans according to guidance. Group homes have resumed visitation. Yet the silence and lack of direction surrounding nursing home visitation is unacceptable. We must do better for our nursing home residents and their loved ones. They deserve answers.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela A. Helming". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "P".

Pamela A. Helming  
Senator, 54th District