

To the members of the New York State Legislature:

**Today is the 144th day since I last saw my mother.**

It's been an incredibly difficult time for me since March 8th, the last day I was able to visit my mother in her nursing home memory care unit on Long Island.

My mother is 90 years old, blind, hearing impaired and has dementia. I have spent the past 20+ weeks reminding myself that she is healthy, she is getting the care she needs, and she is safe.

I was cautiously optimistic when I learned that nursing homes were going to reopen to visitors...and then I read the NYS DOH and CMS restrictions that if \*one\* resident or staff member tests positive, the facility is closed to visitors for 28 days. This applies regardless of whether the employee is direct patient care staff or someone who has no staff/resident contact. I feel this requirement is excessive, unachievable and cruel to families who have been separated from their loved ones for nearly five months. It is like taking one sip of wine and being arrested for a DUI.

\*\* If my mother was in a hospital med/surg unit I would have been able to visit her for WEEKS, on a daily basis, with no visiting restrictions based on staff/patient COVID cases. Why is this different? Hospitals are not being closed to visitors based internal testing results \*\*

In the past weeks I have reached out to various NY state and federal elected officials, only to be connected to voicemail, given a verbal "pat on the head", or promised callbacks from the senate/assemblyperson which never happen. I feel like I am a lone voice shouting into the wilderness.

Each time I receive an email from my mother's facility that reports a new positive case, and the visiting date is pushed out again and again and again, it is devastating. I believe that the zero threshold is unrealistic and unachievable, and that if the governor's policy is allowed to continue as written, **I fear I will never see my mother again.**

Please reconsider the emotional toll on families this policy has caused, and revise the guidelines so we can be reunited with our loved ones after this devastating lengthy separation.

Susan Richer

richer.susan@gmail.com