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ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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MYCHAJLIW CALLS FOR FEDERAL INVESTIGATION OF GOVERNOR CUOMO AND STATE FOR SENDING SICK SENIORS INTO NURSING HOMES

Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. calls for federal investigation of Governor Cuomo, highlights nursing home deaths in Erie County and questions accuracy of data released by NYS

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) –Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. is calling on the federal government to immediately investigate New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York State, surrounding their dubious and deadly decision to send seniors stricken with COVID-19 back into nursing homes.

Comptroller Mychajliw also outlined nursing home deaths in Erie County, and questioned why New York State has one of the highest rates of deaths from COVID-19 at nursing homes than any other state in the nation.

In his letter to United States Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, Comptroller Mychajliw also questioned the accuracy of data released by New York State surrounding COVID-19 related deaths at nursing homes in Erie County and across New York.

“It is despicable and unconscionable for Governor Cuomo to force seniors sick with Coronavirus into nursing homes. This shameful decision exposed the most vulnerable of our community and directly exposed them to a deadly disease. Governor Cuomo cannot investigate himself. We need the federal government to investigate the Governor immediately. Forcing the elderly stricken with COVID-19 into nursing homes was a ticking time bomb. It went off, needlessly killing many seniors in Erie County and across New York State,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

“The federal government should also scrutinize data released by New York State pertaining to nursing home deaths. If New York State cannot be trusted to keep seniors in nursing homes safe, why should we trust the data they are giving us? If Governor Cuomo’s judgment is so inept as to send sick seniors with a deadly disease around vulnerable seniors, they cannot be trusted to have released accurate data on those unnecessary deaths,” added Comptroller Mychajliw.

In his letter to United States Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, Comptroller Mychajliw also asked him to investigate New York State nursing home policies, and whether those policies led to such high death rates at nursing homes in New York State and Erie County.

According to the New York State Department of Health, as of May 28, 2020 there were 524 deaths in Erie County from COVID-19. More than 44% of those fatalities occurred in nursing homes.

“Why are more than half the deaths from COVID-19 occurring at nursing homes in Erie County? Even for hard-hit New York State that number is disproportionately high. These seniors needed to be protected. They were not. It is repulsive that New York State forced the elderly sick with Coronavirus back into nursing homes where the deadly disease would spread like wildfire. The people of New York demand answers and accountability,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

New York State policy, under the direction of Governor Andrew Cuomo, was to return COVID-19 patients to nursing homes where they lived, placing them with those most at risk of also becoming sick. That policy has since come under fire, raising questions as to whether that ultimately led to more COVID-19 deaths among senior citizens in nursing homes.

“Why is New York State not doing a better job providing oversight to nursing homes? Where is the concern for our elderly population? Clearly Governor Cuomo cannot conduct an independent inquiry of his own behavior. This is why we need the federal government to step in immediately,” added Comptroller Mychajliw.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services is currently investigating a Pennsylvania nursing home where the death rate is 12.9 deaths per 100 beds. In Erie County there are four nursing homes with rates above 10 deaths per 100 beds. There is even one nursing home in Erie County with 38.75 deaths per 100 beds.

“If the death rate at that Pennsylvania home is troubling enough for the federal government to investigate, then I suspect the numbers at some Erie County homes would be even more worrisome. I’m asking for an immediate federal investigation into New York State nursing home policies to determine whether it contributed to so many deaths here. I question if the data released by New York State is even accurate,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

Comptroller Mychajliw sent a letter today, June 1, to United States Secretary of Health and Human Services, requesting him to look into what, if any mistakes were made that led to the high death count in Erie County nursing homes, and to pursue any needed changes as allowed by federal law to ensure such devastation doesn’t happen again should there be another round of COVID-19 cases.

“We owe this to the families of all those who died in Erie County nursing homes from COVID-19. We need answers for them,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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