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JONATHAN G. JACOBSON
104th District

April 17, 2020

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

Re: Department of Health's March 25th Directive Regarding COVID-19 Patients

Dear Dr. Zucker:

Thank you for the outstanding job you and the Administration are doing to guide New York State through our current health crisis. While I understand you are dealing with a herculean challenge, I am concerned that the Department of Health's (DOH) March 25th directive regarding COVID-19 patients and nursing homes is misguided and puts our most vulnerable population at risk.

As you are aware, nursing homes—with their dense populations of older residents—are ideal breeding grounds for any virus, particularly one that is as deadly and as easily transmitted as COVID-19.

Nearly a month ago, nursing homes banned outside visitors to reduce the possibility of the virus entering facilities. This decision makes perfect sense. That is why I was shocked to learn that the DOH's March 25th directive makes it illegal for nursing homes in the Hudson Valley and throughout the State to "deny the admission of residents solely based on a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of COVID-19."

I first learned of this situation in a news story reported today and felt compelled to communicate my concerns immediately.

Nursing homes are simply not equipped to act as hospitals and should not be used as depositories for infected individuals. Instead, they should rehabilitate in a facility specifically designated for recovering COVID-19 patients and separate from any nursing homes or anywhere large populations of elderly residents are housed. I urge you to "do no harm" and reverse this directive.

Thank you for your attention to this matter on behalf of those we serve.

Very truly yours,