

Memorandum of **SUPPORT**



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HCA, New York State's home care association, represents nearly 400 providers, organizations and individuals who collectively provide health care to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.

HCA members include Certified Home Health Agencies, Licensed Home Care Services Agencies, Long Term Home Health Care Programs, Hospices, Managed Long Term Care Plans, waiver programs, allied health and health management organizations, and others.

Home care provides and integrates care management and an array of clinical and supportive services for the care of individuals at home and in community. Home care provides primary, preventive, post-acute, long-term, and palliative care for individuals from newborns and children, to adults and seniors. Home care providers work with physicians, hospitals, clinics, health plans, and other health care partners to provide and manage care.

*"Helping New Yorkers **Feel Right** at Home"*

To: Members of the New York State Senate & Assembly

Re: S.8999 by Senator G. Rivera
An Act to amend to amend the public health law, in relation to reporting communicable diseases and deaths caused by such communicable diseases

Date: Monday, September 28, 2020

The Home Care Association of New York State (HCA) ***strongly supports the provision included in S.8999*** that would require the state Department of Health (DOH) to make emergency health survey data available to health care providers for critical situational awareness.

In emergencies, DOH activates a survey system called the Health Emergency Response Data System (HERDS), through which critical emergency health information is collected from providers. This legislation would ensure that information garnered and aggregated from these surveys is also logically and dutifully shared by DOH with providers in order to vitally inform their emergency response efforts.

As part of the current COVID-19 public health emergency, home care agencies, hospices and other health care providers have been required to complete HERDS surveys on a near-daily basis. These surveys continue; yet, DOH has provided virtually no information from the surveys back to the providers and industry representatives to assist in the emergency response. The data has been withheld by DOH, despite continues appeals from HCA and others in the health care industry.

The survey data includes:

- Level-one priority cases providers are serving during the public health emergency (e.g., individuals whose needs required uninterrupted services and without such are at high risk of hospitalization);
- the number of patients diagnosed with COVID-19;
- suspected cases and those who died from COVID-19; and
- the provider's use of and need for personal protective equipment.

This vital data, however, remains unavailable to the reporting agencies and association assistants and advisors.

HCA testified to these concerns at NYS Legislative Hearings on COVID-19 in August. HCA's testimony specifically proposed that DOH be mandated to share the HERDS survey information back with providers to help inform their situational awareness and emergency response capabilities.

DOH dereliction in sharing the HERDS survey results limits not only home care, but all sectors, their associations, and consumer advocates in pivotal emergency health information. This information continues to be critically needed now, and to prepare for any future resurgence of COVID-19.

HCA thanks Senator Rivera for his responsiveness to this critical emergency need.

HCA urges lawmakers to advance this legislation in both the Senate and Assembly.