

BY: Senator SERINO

RECOGNIZING March 25, 2021, as "We Care"
Remembrance Day

WHEREAS, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo declared a state of emergency on March 7, 2020, in response to the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019, known as COVID-19, a deadly virus that targets the elderly and immunocompromised, and took the lives of more than 15,000 residents of nursing homes and other adult care facilities; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize March 25, 2021, as "We Care" Remembrance Day, in conjunction with the one-year anniversary of state guidance that directed COVID-positive patients into nursing homes and other adult care facilities; and

WHEREAS, While much was unknown about the COVID-19 virus, it was known that the elderly and those in congregate residential settings were particularly vulnerable, and the virus posed the threat of spreading through nursing homes and adult care facilities like "fire through dry grass;" and

WHEREAS, On March 13, 2020, visits to nursing homes were limited to only those who were medically necessary in an effort to limit the spread of the virus within these facilities, but such restrictions left many residents socially isolated and cut off from loved ones, who are often their strongest advocates; and

WHEREAS, During a time that was riddled with fear and uncertainty due to the unprecedented public health crisis, residents of these facilities were often unable to receive comfort from their loved ones in-person, and tragically, in many cases, were unable to be with them at the time of their passing; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Department of Health issued guidance on March 25, 2020, requiring nursing homes to re-admit or admit COVID-positive patients and further prohibited such facilities from requiring hospitalized residents to be tested for COVID-19 prior to admission or re-admission; and

WHEREAS, Records indicate more than 9,000 patients recovering from COVID-19 were discharged from hospitals into nursing homes under the March 25th guidance, prior to it being partially rescinded on May 10, 2020; and

WHEREAS, New York's nursing home facilities are home to approximately 100,000 nursing home residents in 613 facilities statewide, each with unique stories and loved ones, and many of whom were, and even still are, active participants in building their communities; and

WHEREAS, These individuals took residence in nursing homes and other

adult care facilities so they can continue to live their lives, with the assistance and supports they need to do so, in a fulfilling manner, while they age with dignity; and

WHEREAS, The loss of any life is tragic, and even more so if such loss was preventable, and it is further tragic if such lives are lost in vain; and

WHEREAS, It is the responsibility of state officials to ensure that the state's most vulnerable residents are protected, and that no state action jeopardizes their health or well-being, and it is incumbent upon such officials to learn from past errors and to constantly improve to promote the safety of all New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, The New York State Department of Health, contrary to the reporting standards of most other states, excluded the deaths of residents that occurred in hospitals from reports of nursing home and adult care facility fatalities, and went to great lengths to prevent disclosing a full accounting of such fatalities; and

WHEREAS, New York State owes it to the residents of nursing homes and adult care facilities who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as those who still live in these facilities or will in the future, who have contributed so much throughout their lives to their communities, to enact fact-driven policies based on a full and transparent accounting of what took place in these facilities to ensure their well-being in the future; and

WHEREAS, Their deaths may not have been counted by the state, but their lives counted immensely to their loved ones, and their legacies should be honored; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to recognize March 25, 2021, as "We Care" Remembrance Day.