

## **Chairman Wenstrup,**

Thank you for convening this critical hearing to examine the appalling and despicable actions of former Governor Cuomo. The gross mismanagement of New York's nursing homes and long-term care facilities under his leadership, coupled with his callous disregard for the patients and families affected by those decisions, has irreparably damaged the trust New Yorkers place in their state government. I hope former Governor Cuomo uses this hearing as an opportunity to take full responsibility for the profound failures of his administration—failures that led to the tragic loss of life among our most vulnerable citizens—and to sincerely apologize to the families and loved ones who will carry the enduring pain of these losses for the rest of their lives.

First, former Governor Cuomo and his administration deliberately concealed nursing home death data in a desperate effort to salvage his political career. However, the truth cannot remain buried, and justice must be served for the victims and families who suffered as a result of his heartless and reckless directive. Accountability is long overdue, and those responsible must be held to account for the lasting damage caused by their actions.

Second, former Governor Cuomo's March 25, 2020 directive mandating that nursing homes accept COVID-19-positive patients was a reckless decision, made hastily and without fully considering the catastrophic risks it posed. This ill-conceived policy ignited a deadly outbreak, allowing the virus to spread rapidly through nursing homes, where our most vulnerable citizens resided. By forcing nursing homes to admit infected patients without adequate protective measures in place, former Governor Cuomo directly intensified the spread of the virus, leading to a tragic and preventable loss of life—one that could have been averted with more careful planning and responsible leadership.

Finally, compounding the outrage, former Governor Cuomo sought to personally profit from the very crisis he so poorly managed. His lucrative book deal, secured at the height of the pandemic, raised serious ethical questions and triggered investigations by both the New York State Attorney General and the Assembly Judiciary Committee. These inquiries only intensified the demand for accountability and transparency in the state's pandemic response and Cuomo's financial dealings. The book, ostensibly written to praise his leadership and provide a so-called "blueprint" for pandemic management, was little more than a self-serving attempt to salvage his image. For the grieving families who lost loved ones, it was an unconscionable insult—a betrayal by a leader who should have been focused on saving lives, not capitalizing on their loss for personal gain.

The 15,000 families who lost loved ones as a result of these disastrous policies deserve justice and accountability from a leader who has consistently refused to provide either. For many, closure remains elusive, and critical questions remain unanswered. The people of New York deserve leadership that acts with integrity and prioritizes their well-being, especially in times of crisis. Our focus must be on uncovering the full truth, learning from these tragic failures, and ensuring that such a calamity is never repeated. Thank you for your leadership in helping these families achieve the closure they deserve and in working to prevent any future recurrence of such catastrophic failures in leadership.

In Service,

Rep. Nick LaLota