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April 24, 2020

Joint Letter from NYS Assembly Members to New York's Hospital CEOs and Chief Administrators

Dear Chief Executive Officers and Hospital Administrators:

We commend you for the work you have been doing on the front lines of the COVID19 pandemic. You have shown great commitment and leadership and shown the nation New York's strength.

We ask you now to address an important matter.

One of the greatest tragedies of the COVID19 pandemic has been that patients have to be alone during their hospitalization. It is especially terrible when a patient is dying.

With us well into the COVID19 Crisis, we can end this heartbreak now, going forward more kindly.

We propose that your hospitals create new **Compassionate Helper Volunteer Programs** to connect families with their loved ones while they are hospitalized. This program will identify individuals who have survived COVID19, possess antibodies and who seek to volunteer to sit with hospitalized COVID19 patients.

We propose:

- That the NYS and NYC DOH embark on an immediate testing program focused at volunteers seeking to be Compassionate Helpers.
- The test will verify COVID19 antibodies have developed in individuals volunteering who have tested positive for the virus and have recovered.
- Compassionate Helpers will aid in non-medical, quality of life activities to ease a patient's and their family's fear due to separation. These volunteers will also assist to overcome language barriers between the patient and staff, particularly important because we know our immigrant community has been hit the greatest.
- These are the key individuals who can volunteer to sit with patients, communicate with families and add some relief to our overwhelmed hospital staff.

- A Compassionate Helper can be a family member as long as they have met the criteria of having COVID19 antibodies.

There are numerous stories from health care workers that they can't do it all.

Compassionate Helpers can ease a small portion of the demands placed on the health care workers by sitting with patients and doing those extra works of care that are just impossible for health care workers to attend to right now.

The activities can be as simple as reading or playing soft music, assisting with feeding, wetting a person's lips or just sitting quietly offering a caring presence to the patient. These are simple acts that help ease stress during this treacherous illness.

Compassionate Helpers can then assist the patient with cell phone or iPad contact with families or friends so there is direct interaction during times of greatest need. If a patient is not able to communicate the Helper will inform the families on non-medical, but quality of life matters.

The hospitals will have control over who is accepted as a Compassionate Helper; and has control to terminate any individual if an individual is not working in the best interest of the patient and the families involved.

This is a program that can start immediately. Although this program can be implemented without legislation, legislation will be introduced to address any issues that may need statutory action.

Sincerely,
 Assemblymember Joseph R. Lentol
 Assemblymember Richard Gottfried
 Assemblymember Simcha Eichenstein
 Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte
 Assemblymember Charles Barron
 Assemblymember Ellen Jaffee
 Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz
 Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi
 Assemblymember Carrie Woerner
 Assemblymember Donna Lupardo
 Assemblymember David Weprin
 Assemblymember Dan Quart
 Assemblymember John McDonald III
 Assemblymember David Buchwald
 Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright
 Assemblymember Diana Richardson
 Assemblymember Daniel Rosenthal
 Assemblymember Michael Blake
 NYC Councilmember Kalman Yeger

Sincerely,
 Assemblymember Al Taylor
 Assemblymember Tom Abinanti
 Assemblymember Felix Ortiz
 Assemblymember Walter Mosley
 Assemblymember Phil Steck
 Assemblymember Steve Stern
 Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon
 Assemblymember Edward Braunstein
 Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa
 Assemblymember Pat Fahy
 Assemblymember Aravella Simotas
 Assemblymember Jeff Dinowitz
 Assemblymember Anthony D'Urso
 Assemblymember Maritza Davila
 Assemblymember Tremaine Wright
 Assemblymember Stacey Pheffer-Amato
 Assemblymember Eric Dilan
 NYC Councilmember Stephen Levin
 NYC Councilmember Chaim Deutsch