



NEW JERSEY SENATE

SENATE CHAMBERS
P.O. Box 099
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0099

May 13, 2020

Honorable Judith Persichilli
Commissioner, Department of Health
P.O. Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360

Dear Commissioner Persichilli,

On a recent conference call involving legislators and representatives of a major New Jersey hospital system, we were told that nursing home patients who pass away in a hospital from COVID-19 are counted as hospital deaths not as deaths of the long-term care (LTC) facilities where they reside, even if their COVID-19 infection was acquired there. Please confirm if this is accurate.

That may change our understanding of the nature of the threat posed by COVID-19 to the general public.

A review of the long-term care facility deaths displayed on New Jersey's COVID-19 Dashboard would lead a reasonable person to believe that approximately half if not more of all COVID-19 deaths in New Jersey are related to the infection of LTC residents.

If what we were told on the conference call is accurate, that percentage of deaths related to LTC-acquired infections may be higher than 50%. Similarly, the risk of death posed by COVID-19 to the remainder of the public may be lower.

Please clarify how the deaths of long-term care facility residents and staff are accounted for on the State dashboard and in other reporting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Pennacchio".

Senator Joe Pennacchio
26th Legislative District