

Staffing

Continued from Page 1A

would allow the order to expire on March 31, or extend it further.

James, who earlier this year withdrew a bid to challenge Hochul in a Democratic gubernatorial primary, called on the governor to enforce the law, citing reports from nursing home workers concerned about understaffing.

"They have revealed to me conditions in some of these nursing homes which are appalling," James said during a media briefing Monday.

"Some patients' needs are not being met because they are under-resourced and there's not adequate staffing," she added, noting the Attorney General's Office is actively investigating several nursing homes for potential violations related to its 2021 probe of the industry.

What NY nursing homes say about staffing

Nursing home trade groups spent months last year urging Hochul to delay enforcement of the staffing law. They asserted it would only worsen a staffing crisis at many nursing homes amid the pandemic.

The law requires every facility to maintain daily staffing hours equal to 3.5 hours of care per resident per day by a certified nurse aide, licensed practical nurse, or registered nurse.

Stephen Hanse, President and CEO of the Health Facilities Association, representing hundreds of nursing homes in New York, on Monday said in a statement it was "simply not possible" for nursing homes to adhere to the staffing minimums due in part to low Medicaid reimbursement rates in the state.

The daily nursing home Medicaid reimbursement rate in New York fell short of costs by an average of nearly \$55, which is the highest shortfall in the nation, Hanse noted, citing a 2018 study by the accounting firm of Hunter, Hanson & Co.

While praising Hochul for "recognizing that New York is facing a once in a generation healthcare staffing crisis," Hanse asserted the governor and lawmakers should focus on state budget proposals to increase the Medicaid rate and recruit and retain more nursing home workers.

The debate over the nursing home staffing law comes as Hochul and lawmakers are pushing to finalize the state budget by April 1. It includes various measures related to Hochul's plan to spend \$10 billion to improve health care and address staffing shortages.

The state Department of Health on Tuesday sent a statement to USA TODAY Network New York regarding the staffing law debate. It noted "nursing homes are strongly encouraged to begin coming into compliance with these new requirements," adding the agency "will continue to monitor the situation to ensure quality care for residents."

Samantha Puid, a spokesperson for the agency, noted Hochul's executive orders were issued "to prevent disruptions in care or reductions in services at facilities that cannot comply due to the ongoing emergency."

Michael Balboni, executive director of the Greater New York Health Care Facilities Association, said in a statement that nursing home operators are working with health care unions to recruit more workers.

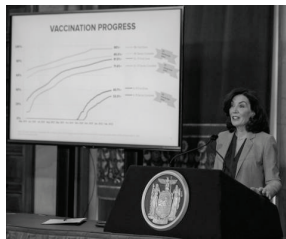
He also voiced concerns about the staffing minimums debate, asserting that "enacting laws that penalize nursing homes without providing the funding and support needed to meet their requirements is a recipe for crisis — one that will hurt seniors most of all."

But Richard Mollot, executive director of the Long Term Care Community Coalition, asserted Hochul's move to postpone the minimum staffing law ultimately hurts nursing homes, because adequate staffing is crucial to quality care.

"We know that, in the face of COVID, staffing saves lives," Mollot said. "New York's failure to ensure adequate staffing, effective infection control, and access to visitation by residents' families in the first wave of COVID cost lives."

Hochul's administration, Mollot added, was "continuing on the path that will only lead to more harm and heartache."

David Robinson is the state health care reporter for the USA TODAY Network New York. He can be reached at drobinson@gannett.com and followed on Twitter: @DrobinsonLoHud



Gov. Kathy Hochul during a media briefing Sunday, Feb. 27 in Albany. OFFICE OF GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

READER SUBMITTED PHOTOS



The lucky Jimmy Healy, 69, shows off his great glasses and Fab 4 hat. For the first time in two years, St. Patrick's Day fun was in the air at the 98-bed skilled nursing facility on County Complex Drive.



Rhonda Ellis, 64, loves St. Patrick's Day holiday cookies.



In addition to traditional Irish music being played over the intercom at Ontario Center in Canandaigua on St. Patrick's Day, the residents were treated to different kinds of springtime pastries, green punch and green holiday cookies. Mostly the enjoyment came from getting dressed up in shamrock lucky glasses, hats, necklaces, green lays and tattoos and no one was disappointed. Here, resident Linda Tabone, 64, wrote a St. Patrick's Day blessing from the heart. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JEFFREY JACOMOWITZ

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NEWS ROUNDUP

East Bloomfield residents asked to complete survey

EAST BLOOMFIELD — Grow Bloomfield, a grassroots development group for the town, is conducting a community-wide survey to assess the public's wishes regarding future quality-of-life needs and development in the town and village, according to Sara Turnbull, the organization's secretary.

Turnbull said the survey has been mailed to most of the town's senior citizens. All other residents and stakeholders are encouraged to compete the survey online at www.bit.ly/bloomfieldsurvey. The survey can also be found on the group's home page at www.growbloomfield.org.

The last such survey was conducted by the comprehensive plan steering committee three years ago, said Grow Bloomfield President Paul Hudson.

The survey closes April 30. Grow Bloomfield was formed last year to help Bloomfield grow and blossom while retaining its rural character and scenic beauty. Interested parties are invited to attend the public Grow Bloomfield meetings, held 4 p.m. every third Wednesday at Turnbull Restoration on Routes 5 and 20 near Toomey's Corners.

Farmington seeks summer rec help

FARMINGTON — The town of Farmington is hiring for its summer recreation program. Positions available include leader, assistant and counselor in training.

If interested, please complete an application at <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/b66abe891e415293f581cb5cae5f8d>.

Get ready for Retro Vinyl Record Night

CANANDAIGUA — The Ontario County Historical

Society and the Canandaigua Record Exchange are teaming up for a night of history.

Retro Vinyl Record Night will be from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, April 9. The Historical Society will highlight and display some of the unique music-related artifacts in its collection, like an Edison Home Phonograph.

A carefully crafted playlist curated by the Canandaigua Record Exchange will carry visitors through music history, and will serve as the night's DJ. Tickets for this event are \$20 each, and can be found at OCHS.org/events/retro-vinyl-records-night/. Included in a ticket purchase are a beer or soda token, raffle ticket for a goodie bag assembled by the Canandaigua Record Exchange, and an event sticker.

For more information, contact Historical Society Executive Director Cody Grabhorn at cody@OCHS.org or 585-394-4975, or visit OCHS.org.

Walk to raise funds for Huntington's disease set

CANANDAIGUA — The Northeast Region of the Huntington's Disease Society of America will host the Rochester Team Hope Walk at 9 a.m. Saturday, May 14, at The Commons. All proceeds support the organization's mission to improve the lives of people affected by Huntington's disease and their families.

Team Hope is HDSA's largest national grassroots fundraising event, which takes place in over 100 cities across the U.S. and has raised more than \$20 million since its inception in 2007.

For more information about the event, please contact John Sulzener at sulzenerja@yahoo.com or 585-353-5798. Online registration and how to make donations can be found at hdsa.org/thwrochester.

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Postal information
Daily Messenger, 143-980, is published daily at PO Box 580, Hornell, NY 14843. Periodicals postage paid at Canandaigua, NY 14824. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Messenger, PO Box 580, Hornell, NY 14843.