

# Sen. Darling: Calls for audit of DHS reporting of long-term care deaths

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Madison –[Wisconsin's Department of Health Services \(DHS\) undercounted 1,000 COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities.](#) Senator Darling is calling for an investigation into the Department's reporting.

"I am asking the chairs of the Legislative Audit Committee to investigate DHS and their handling of COVID-19 data," Darling said, "Their severe underreporting and lack of transparency put more lives at risk and diverted attention from the crisis in our long-term care facilities."

While previously, the administration's data attributed 26-30% of COVID-19 deaths to long-term care facilities, accurate reporting now shows that 45% of all COVID-19 deaths in Wisconsin were linked to long-term care facilities. In an interview on COVID-19 outbreaks in our long-term care facilities in April 2020, former Secretary-designee Andrea Palm said, "[We want to make sure we are being as transparent as we can without exposing individuals and their privacy in a way that does not advance the public health.](#)" Senator Darling says needs to be open with the public. "While DHS promised to promote transparency in COVID-19's impact on long-term care facilities, their actions hid the gravity of the crisis in our long-term care facilities," Darling said, "The public deserves to know the truth about why DHS undercounted deaths in long-term care facilities and how this affected the Department and Governor Evers' COVID-19 response."

Less than 10% of the \$2 billion in federal dollars Governor Evers received for COVID-19 relief was made available to Wisconsin's long-term care facilities. As DHS was undercounting COVID-19 deaths in long-term care facilities, our state was one of the last in the nation to begin vaccinating our long-term care facility residents. Senator Darling says DHS must answer to the people of Wisconsin.

"Since the beginning of the pandemic, our state has asked for transparency from the Evers administration," Darling said, "Transparency on when he planned to reopen the state. Transparency on when constituents could expect to see their

unemployment checks. Transparency on when vaccines would be available for our seniors. Now we need transparency on why his Department failed to link 1,000 deaths accurately to long-term care facilities.”

Senator Darling represents portions of Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Washington, and Waukesha Counties.