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NEW YORK STATE'S LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS EXPRESS SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT LEGALIZED MARIJUANA

Health Leaders Urge State to Approach Legalization Thoughtfully and With Extreme Caution

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), representing all 58 local health departments in New York State, today expressed serious concerns about the legalization of an adult-use regulated marijuana program, and called on lawmakers to approach legalization thoughtfully and with extreme caution.

The concerns expressed by NYSACHO stem from research substantiating that the use and availability of marijuana carries numerous risks, including: future high-risk of addiction to other drugs; harmful cognitive and academic effects; adverse cardiac and respiratory effects; unintentional exposures to children; and motor vehicle accidents.

It was for these reasons that NYSACHO earlier this year submitted a memorandum of opposition to legalized recreational marijuana use. Fundamentally, NYSACHO remains opposed to the recreational use of marijuana. If such a policy is nevertheless enacted and is true to the State Health Department's standard of "doing more good than harm," NYSACHO is calling for the establishment of critical safeguards before sales are legalized, including, but not limited to:

- Setting the legal age of sale at 21 years of age in combination with adoption of Tobacco 21 policy at the state-level.

- Establishing clinical trials and properly funding surveillance and research efforts to ensure the State can identify, measure and respond to foreseen and unforeseen impacts of legalized marijuana.
- Adding marijuana to the Clean Indoor Air Act to ensure children, youth and other vulnerable populations are not exposed to marijuana use or second hand smoke.
- Funding studies which will help evaluate reliable methods of toxicology field-testing and impairment levels which will help set evidence-based regulations for impaired driving, as it pertains to marijuana use.
- Allocate additional funding to Local Health Departments for anticipated increases in workload, including:
 - o Response to Clean Indoor Air Act complaints
 - o Sales enforcement activities
 - o Dissemination of educational information campaigns to protect vulnerable populations, including children and pregnant women, from harmful effects of marijuana use.
- Formulating safety regulations for edibles, including child resistant packaging and restricting products/packaging that appeal to children.

“As county health officials who serve as the first line of defense in our communities, we have seen up close the devastation associated with the abuse of legal prescription opioid medications. We need to be certain that the implementation of any recreational marijuana policy does not create another unintended public health crisis,” said Paul A. Pettit, NYSACHO President and Public Health Director of Genesee & Orleans County Health Departments.

“We look forward to working with the State to ensure our shared priority is protecting the public against the harmful risks associated with marijuana use.”

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSCHO) supports, advocates for, and empowers local health departments in their work to promote health and wellness and prevent disease, disability and injury throughout New York State. Visit us at: www.nysacho.org

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