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PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS' STATEMENT ON 2019-2020 FINAL STATE BUDGET

by NYSACHO President Paul Pettit

“The final budget agreement has yielded mixed results for public health. We are heartened by the elimination of an adult use cannabis program and the inclusion of a new policy to further combat childhood lead poisoning. We also are grateful for the restoration of cuts to the Population Health Improvement Program, which supports local health departments’ community health improvement planning efforts.

“However, the final agreement cut public health funding (Article 6) in New York City by approximately \$60 million dollars (when fully annualized), and failed to provide funding levels we believe are necessary to fully implement the childhood lead poisoning prevention program.

“We understand that public resources are limited, however, the net impact of this budget on public health is that our climb becomes even steeper, in New York City in particular, as we work to provide essential services on critical issues. Priorities that we must still contend with include: HIV testing and treatment; measles exposure and immunization; food borne illnesses and vector borne diseases such as West Nile and Zika; sexually transmitted diseases; TB testing and treatment; smoking cessation activities (smoking remains one of the leading causes of preventable death); and many others.

“Our take away from this budget is that we must redouble our efforts to educate our lawmakers concerning the consequences of their policy and budgeting decisions — not just the immediate consequences, but also the longer term deleterious impacts and avoidable costs that we believe can be prevented with sound and appropriately funded public health policy.

“The vast expertise and experience of the NYSACHO membership as community health strategists, will be a critical factor in ensuring we meet those high standards. We look forward to working with policy makers and legislative leaders throughout the remainder of the legislative session.”

Paul Pettit is the President of NYSACHO, which represents all 58 of New York State’s local health departments. He also serves as Public Health Director for the Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments.

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