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For More Information, Please Contact:

Sarah Ravenhall, MHA, CHES, Executive Director, NYSACHO

sarah@nysacho.org 518-527-3547

LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS APPLAUD GOVERNOR, ASSEMBLY AND SENATE PASSAGE OF CRITICAL PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY STRENGTHENING IMMUNIZATION RATES IN SCHOOLS BY REPEALING NON-MEDICAL EXEMPTIONS FROM VACCINATIONS

(Albany, New York. June 13, 2019) The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) representing the 58 Local Health Departments in New York State applauds and congratulates Governor Cuomo, the New York State Assembly and Senate for voting in favor of Assembly bill A2371 and Senate bill 2994-A, repealing certain provisions relating to non-medical exemptions from vaccination. We are grateful for the leadership of Assembly member Jeffrey Dinowitz and Senator Brad Hoylman who sponsored this legislation in their respective houses, and were champions behind its passage. Governor Cuomo took swift action to sign this bill into law immediately following its passage in both houses, demonstrating a monumental commitment to public health policy and eliminating vaccine preventable disease in New York State.

A number of communities in New York State are now facing the health consequences of non-medical exemptions from vaccinations. These exemptions, while well-intended, brought about a resurgence of preventable communicable diseases, resulting in numerous and ongoing transmission of diseases in our communities. Decades of scientific research underpin the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. The passage of this bill will strengthen herd immunity thereby protecting those individuals, who for medical reasons, are unable to receive vaccinations.

“As public health professionals, and as policymakers, we routinely weigh the ethical balance of protecting individual rights against protecting our communities at large.” said Daniel J. Stapleton, NYSACHO President and Public Health Director in Niagara County “Both statute and case law have continually upheld that the weight of this choice must lean towards protecting the community at large when personal choice puts the lives of others at risk.”

NYSACHO applauds New York State, for enacting this important public health policy into law, and in so doing will return us to a time where measles, and other vaccine-preventable diseases, are a footnote from the past and not a risk to our children’s and our futures.

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