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For More Information, Please Contact:  
Sarah Ravenhall, MHA, CHES, Executive Director, NYSACHO  
518-527-3547

## **EXECUTIVE BUDGET'S PUBLIC HEALTH PROVISIONS TO CHALLENGE CURRENT AND FUTURE PANDEMIC RESPONSE**

By Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director, NYSACHO

“We were disappointed to see the Executive Budget proposal released earlier this week included \$66 million in public health cuts. These proposed cuts would adversely impact our continued preparedness and response, signaling a potential retreat from our commitment to public health infrastructure as the pandemic continues across the state.

“While there are several health positive elements included within the Executive proposal, including expansion of tele-health and pharmacist scope of practice, there are other elements that would have a negative public health impact. We urge the state to fully evaluate the health impact of these provisions in alignment with their ‘Health Across All Policies’ approach.

“We are sensitive to the state’s fiscal challenges. However, we are experiencing first-hand the impact of 12 straight years of underfunding public health. This is not a time to again cut public health, rather, to learn the lessons borne from this crisis and properly invest in public health. It is a time to stop COVID-19, and to prevent the human and economic devastation of future pandemics and public health threats.

“The single biggest cut in the public health provisions is to the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, an entity that provides vaccine and numerous other health services to the largest jurisdiction within our state, including our largest and most diverse minority communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

“Local public health leaders, public health workers and the communities we protect must rally to secure changes to this proposal. Just days ago, Governor Cuomo accurately stated that we must expect even more deadly viral threats in the future, and on numerous occasions he has articulated the imperative to ensure equity in our pandemic response and vaccinations.

“All the right points, but we do not believe this budget proposal will get us there. However, there is still an opportunity to introduce health-positive, revenue generating proposals within the budget that will deliver on these important promises.

“We’ve worked hard to coordinate with and support a state-led response to meet the demands of the pandemic. We will take the same unified approach here, working with our leaders to build support for invigorating and sustaining a robust and responsive public health infrastructure.”

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