



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 30, 2021

For More Information, Please Contact:

Sarah Ravenhall, MHA, CHES, Executive Director, NYSACHO

518-527-3547

**NYSACHO TESTIFIES ON COMBATTING CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING
TO SENATE STANDING COMMITTEES ON HEALTH, HOUSING,
CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**Message to State Leaders: There is Limited Value in New Public
Health Policy Without Also Providing Resources for Effective
Implementation**

(Albany, New York) New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) Executive Director Sarah Ravenhall today provided testimony on efforts to combat child lead poisoning, calling on the state to provide increased funding to local health departments.

Central to Ms. Ravenhall's testimony to the Senate Standing Committees on Health and Housing, Construction and Community Development, was a plea to lawmakers to no longer pass public health policy without also providing the resources necessary to effectively implement the policy.

"NYSACHO fully supports policy changes that reduce the incidence of lead poisoning. However, no matter how well-intended a policy may be, it will have little value if it cannot be effectively implemented because of resource limitations," Ms. Ravenhall testified. "Effective policy therefore must be predicated on our state leaders' willingness to provide the sustainable and flexible fiscal resources needed for implementation."

Ms. Ravenhall also testified concerning the numerous challenges local health departments (LHDs) routinely encounter, including: 10 consecutive years of disinvestment by the state, totaling more than \$150 million in cuts; an ongoing loss of public health workers; a demoralized public health system diminished by inadequately supported workload demands; the ongoing response to the covid pandemic; and the anticipated wave of public health staff retirements that will further diminish public health response and prevention capabilities.

According to data from the New York State Department of Health, the number of full time LHD staff working on core services declined by 7% between 2015 and 2020. During this same period, the population of the state increased by 3%.

Further, according to a NYSACHO survey, 90% of New York's LHDs do not have enough staff to adequately provide basic foundational public health services to their communities. In total, more than 1,000 additional full-time staff are needed to provide an adequate infrastructure and a minimum package of public health services.

"We urge the Legislature to identify funding to support current and future lead poisoning prevention activities, both primary and secondary. In particular, primary prevention can significantly reduce the secondary costs of lead poisoning, and most importantly protect children from life-altering damage," Ravenhall testified.

The full testimony can be found at: <https://www.nysacho.org/topic/testimony/>

###