



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: November 12, 2021
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NYSACHO STATEMENT REGARDING STATE AND LOCAL COORDINATION OF PANDEMIC RESPONSE

By Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director

“Local health departments (LHDs) are and for decades have been the first responders to public health threats such as COVID-19. Our member LHDs lived in real time the intentional circumvention of the pre-existing planned and drilled pandemic response, which had placed LHDs at the center of the hub.

“Notwithstanding the state’s change in approach at that time, LHD’s immediately pivoted and worked to remain integrated in COVID-19 response efforts, providing countless critical services from contact tracing to vaccine distribution, and numerous others.

“We now look forward to working with our new governor and a new incoming health commissioner to strengthen our public health system to ensure it remains ready for any and all public health threats.

“For more than a decade LHDs have been underfunded by state leaders, and the impact of COVID-19 response has further taxed the ability of LHDs to carry out their mission with the resources available to them. This year, we have a confluence of factors that overwhelmingly support renewed investment in our local public health infrastructure: we remain engaged in a deadly pandemic; state and local leaders and the public are more aware than ever of the critical need for local public health services; and the state’s finances are robust.

“We cannot let this opportunity pass. The health and welfare of our communities and the ability of the public health system to respond to certain future threats is in the balance.”

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