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STATEMENT ON GOVERNOR HOCHUL DECLARING POLIO A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

**By Nancy McGraw, MPH, MBA, LCSW, Public Health Director, County of Sullivan;
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"The governor's declaration is a critical step necessary to respond to the tremendous threat posed by the transmission of polio that has been detected in New York State. For too many years now, there has been a great deal of false information perpetuated that has led far too many people to become misinformed and fearful of vaccines. Vaccines have safely saved millions of lives and prevented injury and death, and are one of the greatest public health achievements of the past 100 years. Unfortunately, because of misinformation spread on social media and by other means, many people have failed to adequately protect their health by getting themselves and their children vaccinated. We know that the best way to protect against contracting polio is to get vaccinated.

"We are grateful that the governor has taken this necessary step to signal the gravity of this evolving public health emergency. However, this is one of many steps that must be taken by state government to stabilize an overloaded and under-resourced public health system. Virtually all 58 local health departments are experiencing critical staff and resource shortages, posing grave threats to their ability to protect the public's health. These are vulnerabilities that must be addressed in the coming state fiscal year."

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