



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 28, 2023
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NYSACHO TESTIMONY HIGHLIGHTS 2023-24 STATE BUDGET PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITIES

Budget Includes Sound Policy But Not Enough Funding to Implement

(Albany, New York) New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) President Dr. Irina Gelman will provide testimony today before the joint legislative hearing on the health and public health components of the 2023-24 Executive Budget proposal.

In her testimony, Dr. Gelman, who also serves as Commissioner of Health for Nassau County, will highlight a number of proposals submitted by Governor Hochul that will improve public health, including investments in lead poisoning prevention, and new tobacco and e-cigarette control initiatives.

However, central to Dr. Gelman's testimony will be the need for the state to better fund both proposed and existing public health initiatives.

In her testimony Dr. Gelman states: "Entering this budget session, we see the Governor has prioritized several public health policies that we support, as we believe they will better protect New Yorkers. However, without the fiscal commitment and resources our local public health workforce needs to take action, these policies will remain impossible to implement.

"Strong public health policy is policy that is appropriately funded," she will testify.

A case in point cited in her testimony is the Executive's lead poisoning prevention funding proposal of \$18 million. According to NYSACHO's analysis, the true cost of effectively implementing the Governor's plan at the local level is \$58 million.

"The large shortfall fails to account for or support the work public health officials will need to conduct at the local level to maintain an inspection registry." Dr. Gelman will testify.

This lack of actionable funding follows a 2019 unfunded state mandate to enforce a lower blood lead level, and an administrative cut to lead poisoning prevention that impacted 12 counties.

Dr. Gelman will testify: “It is imperative that this lead poisoning prevention policy, and other policies that local health departments are implementing to protect children, are fully funded in the enacted budget. We urgently request your (legislative) support by increasing the lead funding appropriation in your one-house bills from \$18 million to \$58 million and further, moving the appropriation to the lead poisoning prevention program under the Department of Financial Services budget.”

The Governor also has proposed a strong tobacco control package that NYSACHO encourages the Legislature to retain, including the Governor’s proposal to ban menthol flavored cigarette. While prior tobacco control laws removed flavored e-cigarettes from the market, menthol cigarettes, flavored cigars, and flavored hookah are still available for purchase.

“Flavored products are marketed by the industry to communities of color, LGBTQIA+ and low-income communities and flavored products hook kids on nicotine,” Dr. Gelman will testify.

NYSACHO also has prioritized modifying New York’s cannabis statute to mirror the New York State public health law on flavored tobacco products by banning flavored aerosolized and combustible cannabis products, and establishing clear marketing and packaging requirements for cannabis retailers, ensuring a consistent standard for aerosolized and combustible products throughout the state.

NYSACHO’s full budget testimony can be found at https://www.nysacho.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NYSACHO-SFY-23-24-Budget-Testimony_FINAL.pdf

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