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COUNTY HEALTH OFFICIALS STATEMENT ON CONCLUSION OF 2023 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By Sarah Ravenhall, NYSACHO Executive Director

"We are proud of the legislative successes achieved during this session and grateful to the perseverance and hard work of the Legislature to pass several important bills that will streamline provisions of core public health services. However, to implement programs that bridge gaps in health equity, we must be realistic about the fiscal and staffing requirements needed to deliver public health prevention work. The lead rental registry program, enacted earlier this year, is a key example of life-saving public health policy that without adequate funding will fall detrimentally short when being implemented.

"NYSACHO is grateful to Senator Rivera and Assemblymember Paulin for their leadership in securing the passage of two priority bills that will lift a significant regulatory burden from local health departments (LHDs) concerning the provision of public health services in homes. The elimination of these barriers to public health interventions will allow LHDs to focus on improving the health and wellbeing of communities by providing core public health services.

"NYSACHO is also grateful to Governor Hochul for her strong leadership in securing cannabis enforcement provisions that will aid in the identification and elimination of unlicensed and illegal cannabis sellers.

"Progress was also made on legislation (A7154/S1531) that would require health care providers to enter adult vaccination records into a statewide system. This measure would generate a powerful resource to aid our efforts in monitoring and preventing the spread of infectious diseases. The bill was passed by the Assembly but not by the Senate. This measure will be another priority item for NYSACHO in the next legislative session.

"Of particular significance to county health officials was the formal appointment of Dr. James McDonald as New York State Commissioner of Health. Over the breadth of his

considerable career Commissioner McDonald has demonstrated a deep understanding of and commitment to the mission and needs of local public health agencies. We congratulate him on his appointment and look forward to fostering an environment of collaboration between his department and the 58 local health departments across New York State.”

“Lastly, NYSACHO remains gravely concerned about the lack of funding necessary to effectively implement the state’s existing blood lead level standard for children. A 2019 state law requires interventions for children with blood lead levels of 5 ug/dL or greater — a policy that the state never fully funded. Due to this funding shortfall, numerous critically important health equity focused local programs, including the lead rental registry, cannot be effectively operationalized. We are hopeful that lawmakers next year will better understand the lifelong harm posed by lead poisoning and invest the resources necessary to strengthen the lead prevention work provided by local health departments.”

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