

1 **2021 NYSAC Legislative Conference**
2 **Standing Committee on Public Health/Mental Health**
3 **Resolution #1**

4 **Resolution for Allocating Unrestricted Resources to Local Health**
5 **Departments to Fortify Provision of Core Public Health Services and**
6 **Prepare for Implementation of Expanded Public Health Mandates**

7 **WHEREAS**, local health departments are New York State’s partners and operational
8 extensions, working in the forefront of communities, addressing public health issues
9 and serving as the first line of defense against all public health crises by protecting
10 communities and residents; and

11 **WHEREAS**, activities led by the 58 local health departments are paramount to our
12 collective ability to achieve Prevention Agenda goals, address health disparities, improve
13 health outcomes and ensure community safety and stability; and

14 **WHEREAS**, Directors and Commissioners of public health are health strategists within
15 their respective counties, with the unparalleled expertise needed to apply knowledge,
16 bridge competency gaps, lead multi-sector health improvements, and identify
17 vulnerable populations; and

18 **WHEREAS**, un- and under-funded public health mandates continue to emerge
19 routinely, including monitoring of contaminants in drinking water, registration of
20 cooling towers, lowering of the elevated blood lead level in children (EBLL), and, most
21 recently, all activities related to the COVID-19 response; and

22 **WHEREAS**, the state aid share for core public health services has not kept up with
23 growing public health needs, nor has it supported the implementation of new and
24 expanded state mandates and has not received an increase in core public health aid in
25 more than six years, nor have they received adequate compensation needed to respond
26 to emerging health issues; and

27 **WHEREAS**, during the 2020-2021 State Budget Session, New York State became the
28 epicenter of a global pandemic that has required a surge in and restructuring of the
29 existing public health and health care infrastructure to ensure control of the virus and
30 equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines; and

31 **WHEREAS**, New York State is considering policy to legalize regulated cannabis,
32 which, if passed, will lead to increased response including education, surveillance,
33 public awareness, and oversight by local health departments; and

34 **WHEREAS**, the public health workforce employed within local health departments are
35 first responders, working at the forefront of communities during times of need and
36 when emerging health issues occur, such as COVID-19 response; and

37 **WHEREAS**, State Budget appropriations for public health spending has been reduced
38 year after year, and new funding streams for emergency response activities are
39 frequently accompanied with stringent federal spending or supplanting

1 restrictions, which impacts how funds can be utilized and reduces flexibility to respond
2 to local community needs; and

3 **WHEREAS**, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 response, the public health
4 workforce is central to New York State’s public health infrastructure yet is dwindling
5 due to public-sector budget restraints, competition, a surplus of workers who are
6 approaching retirement, the inability to recruit new workers in all areas throughout the
7 state — all of which culminate in significant workforce retention challenges; and

8 **WHEREAS**, New York State does not allow local health departments to recover any of
9 its necessary or fringe expenses for local health department personnel under Article 6,
10 therefore creating a barrier to hiring new staff; and

11 **WHEREAS**, a thorough assessment of the full fiscal implications of any new policy is
12 crucial if the state desires to maintain the promise made to local taxpayers through the 2
13 percent state property tax cap and if the state wishes to deliver on new public health
14 promises that they want to implement through state statute and regulations; and

15 **WHEREAS**, now, more than ever, is the time for a call to action to evaluate and
16 allocate the resources that are truly needed to further expand public health and safety
17 infrastructure in New York State, further demonstrating the State’s commitment to pass
18 progressive public health policy and thereby protect the residents of New York State.

19 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the New York State Association of
20 Counties (NYSAC) joins the New York State Association of County Health Officials
21 (NYSACHO) in calling on the Governor and State Legislature to provide resources,
22 flexibility and support to local health departments within County and New York
23 City Governments by:

- 24 1. allocating unrestricted, flexible funding to local health departments so they have
25 the resources needed to respond to threats like COVID-19;
- 26 2. restoring article 6 reimbursement to New York City at 36%, the same rate as the
27 rest of the state;
- 28 3. Extending the Imminent Threat to Public Health declaration as we continue to
29 respond to COVID-19 beyond December 31, 2020;
- 30 4. securing the restoration of the 20% withholding that New York State is making
31 on all state reimbursements;
- 32 5. Providing 100% reimbursement for the first full year of any new and/or
33 significantly expanded public health mandates emerging from law, rule
34 or regulation;

35 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution be sent to the counties
36 of New York encouraging member counties to enact similar resolutions; and

1 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC shall forward copies of this resolution to
2 Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State Legislature and all others deemed
3 necessary and proper.