

1 **2024 NYSAC Fall Seminar**
2 **Standing Committee on Public Health/Mental Health**
3 **Resolution #2**

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5 **Resolution Urging New York State to Support Efforts to Combat the Opioid**
6 **Epidemic by Amending County Law § 677 and Providing Additional**
7 **Reimbursement for Coroner and Medical Examiner Duties**
8

9 **WHEREAS**, the United States is facing a worsening overdose epidemic, with opioid-
10 related deaths rising from 49,860 in 2019 to 81,806 in 2022, according to the CDC; and
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12 **WHEREAS**, two U.S. Surgeon Generals, Vivek Murthy and Jerome Adams, released
13 reports and advisories attempting to address the opioid epidemic; and
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15 **WHEREAS**, the New York State Prevention Agenda for 2019-2024 includes substance
16 use disorder prevention as a priority focus area for state and local action; and
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18 **WHEREAS**, the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics has consistently ranked
19 New York State among the top five states with the highest number of recorded overdose-
20 related deaths since 2015; and
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22 **WHEREAS**, New York State reported 6,358 overdose-related deaths in 2022 and a
23 high death rate of 31.4, according to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics; and
24

25 **WHEREAS**, county coroners and medical examiners are directed to make inquiries
26 into unnatural deaths, including overdose deaths, within their county under New York
27 State's County Law § 677; and
28

29 **WHEREAS**, the New York State Commissioner of Health or their designee has the
30 right to request all copies of reports and records related to a death, including, but not
31 limited to, autopsy reports and toxicology reports under County Law § 677 and Public
32 Health Law § 206-d; and
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34 **WHEREAS**, county coroners and medical examiners must report records and reports
35 to various authorities, including the commissioner of health, district attorney,
36 commissioner of mental health, and others under County Law § 677; and
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38 **WHEREAS**, local health departments' mandated core public health work includes
39 reducing preventable injury and death; and
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41 **WHEREAS**, for the purpose of public health surveillance activities, local health
42 departments require access to information and data to monitor morbidity and mortality
43 trends in their jurisdiction; and

1 **WHEREAS**, access to timely local data will allow local health departments to better
2 develop and target evidence-based public health interventions to reduce injury and
3 death due to the current overdose epidemic; and
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5 **WHEREAS**, County Law § 677 does not include a provision allowing local health
6 departments to request all reports and records related to a death within their county,
7 nor allow coroners and medical examiners to provide that information; and
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9 **WHEREAS**, this is a barrier to public health responses to injury and deaths caused by
10 overdoses; and
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12 **WHEREAS**, public health law provides the Commissioner of Health with supervisory
13 oversight of local health officials and local health departments and allows them to
14 regularly assign public health statutory responsibilities to local health departments as
15 their designee; and
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17 **WHEREAS**, allowing the Commissioner of Health to make local health officials
18 designees under County Law § 677 would ensure that requests for data are made with
19 appropriate oversight and are aligned with the official purposes of the New York State
20 Department of Health.
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22 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the New York State Association of
23 Counties (NYSAC) urges the Governor and Legislature to adopt legislation to allow local
24 health officials to be considered a designee of the State Commissioner of Health under
25 County Law § 677; and
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27 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC calls upon Governor Hochul to direct the
28 New York State Department of Health to provide additional reimbursements to New
29 York county coroners and medical examiners for the purpose of carrying out their duties
30 in accordance with County Law § 671 and 677; and
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32 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, copies of this resolution be sent to the counties of
33 New York state encouraging member counties to enact similar resolutions; and
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35 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC shall forward copies of this resolution to
36 Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York State Legislature, and all others deemed
37 necessary and proper.