

1 **2020 NYSAC Legislative Conference**
2 **Standing Committee on Public Health/Mental Health**
3 **Resolution #1**

4 **Protecting New York State’s Public Water Supply from Harmful**
5 **Contaminants by Increasing Funding to County Drinking Water**
6 **Enhancement Grants**

7 **WHEREAS**, of the 58 local health departments (LHDs) in New York State, 36 of these
8 counties and the City of New York provide environmental health services in their
9 communities; and

10 **WHEREAS**, twenty-one rural LHDs are considered partial service counties, where the
11 environmental health services are provided by the New York State Department of
12 Health (NYSDOH) through state district and regional offices; and

13 **WHEREAS**, full service LHDs and those NYSDOH offices conduct oversight and
14 monitoring activities and provide technical assistance to ensure that public water supply
15 operations achieve and maintain compliance with all state and federal laws and
16 regulations; and

17 **WHEREAS**, environmental activities led by the State and counties include carrying out
18 sanitary surveys, providing notice and reminders to public water supply operators
19 regarding testing and reporting requirements, creating annual sampling schedules
20 through New York’s Safe Drinking Water Information System (SDWIS), and monitoring
21 to ensure that testing is performed at the appropriate times throughout the year; and

22 **WHEREAS**, environmental health staff employed at full-service LHDs work hard to
23 ensure the quality of drinking water and routinely face emerging issues that pose
24 significant threats to water quality, including road salt contamination; the emergence of
25 unregulated chemicals in drinking water; water main breaks and infrastructure damage;
26 extreme weather conditions; agricultural impacts; and harmful algal blooms; and

27 **WHEREAS**, in the face of these threats to our drinking water, LHDs continue to face
28 ongoing resource limitations that undermine their capacity to respond; and

29 **WHEREAS**, the two percent property tax cap constrains local government budgets;
30 and

31 **WHEREAS**, when coupled with stagnant state funding and the imposition of new
32 unfunded public health mandates, the result is that LHDs too often struggle to maintain
33 current programs, much less enhance their ability to respond to the growing challenges
34 of providing safe water for drinking and recreation; and

35 **WHEREAS**, extraordinary events, such as those faced in Hoosick Falls, stretch LHD
36 resources and threaten to erode our already limited capacity to maintain other critical
37 public health services; and

1 **WHEREAS**, at both the federal and state levels, when a new public health threat
2 emerges, there is a scramble to identify emergency funding for response, and, while
3 emergency funding is helpful, it does not address the long-term need for sufficient and
4 stable funding to maintain a high-quality public health infrastructure and workforce,
5 ready and trained to respond to new threats as they emerge; and

6 **WHEREAS**, while New York State has made significant fiscal and programmatic
7 enhancements to assist municipalities in protecting drinking water, the same cannot be
8 said for support for the county-level role of monitoring and regulation of drinking water
9 supplies; and

10 **WHEREAS**, New York State invested \$2.5 billion in Clean Water Infrastructure and
11 Water Quality Protection in 2017-18 state fiscal year and increased appropriations by
12 \$500 million in the 2019-20 SFY budget; and

13 **WHEREAS**, the total investment for Drinking Water Enhancement grants is only 0.2%
14 of the entire appropriation for Clean Water Infrastructure and Water Quality Protection;
15 and

16 **WHEREAS**, the original appropriation for Drinking Water Enhancement grants was
17 \$6m, but between the 2009-2010 SFY and 2013-14 SFY, grants were cut by a cumulative
18 16%, and then have remained flat since 2013-14 despite growing public health needs and
19 mandates.

20 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the New York State Association of
21 Counties calls on the Governor and State Legislature to take the following actions in the
22 coming fiscal year to protect and enhance public water supply:

- 23 1. Restore drinking water enhancement grant funding to \$6 million;
- 24 2. Increase drinking water enhancement grant funding to equal one percent of clean
25 water infrastructure act appropriations, totaling \$30 million;
- 26 3. Consider policy recommendations that strengthen and facilitate partnerships
27 across state agencies and between those state and local government entities that
28 share primary responsibility for assuring access to safe drinking water;
- 29 4. Recognize the negative impact the last several years of funding constraints have
30 had on both the local and state public health workforce and work together to
31 identify ways to maintain and enhance the capacity of our public health
32 infrastructure; and

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

35 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that New York State Association of Counties shall
36 forward copies of this resolution to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, the New York State
37 Legislature and all others deemed necessary and proper.