

1 **2022 NYSAC Fall Seminar**
2 **NYSAC Board of Directors**
3 **Resolution #4**

4 **Resolution in Support of Addressing COVID’s Impact on the Low Morale**
5 **and Exodus of Professionals from New York’s Public Workforce through**
6 **the Issuance of Workforce Bonuses, Stipends, and Enhanced Retirement**
7 **Benefits to Sustain the State’s Public Infrastructure**

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9 **WHEREAS**, the pandemic has presented historic challenges to the response
10 capabilities of public first responders; and

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12 **WHEREAS**, these professionals, who were already taxed by pre-pandemic workloads
13 that extended beyond available resources, saw an explosion of critical tasks and
14 responsibilities to combat and mitigate transmission of the COVID-19 virus; and

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16 **WHEREAS**, not only were local public staff subject to this tremendous increase in
17 workload, but they were also faced numerous other challenges, including daily exposure
18 to risk of infection, worry for their own loved ones, and hostility from a public that was
19 and remains conflicted on compliance with response activities; and

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21 **WHEREAS**, a consortium of researchers from the NYS Association of County Health
22 Officials (NYSACHO), the State University of New York (SUNY) Oneonta, Bassett
23 Healthcare Network Research, and Utica University convened to conduct a statewide
24 survey of public workers and compiled the findings in a report entitled “Pain and
25 Perseverance;” and

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27 **WHEREAS**, more than 200 staff responded to the survey, documenting the profound
28 impact these factors have had on public workers; and

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30 **WHEREAS**, the survey data indicate:

- 90.4% of respondents have felt overwhelmed by workload;
- 75.6% felt disconnected from family and friends because of workload;
- 65% felt unappreciated at work and 75% felt inadequately compensated;
- 35% received job-related threats because of work by members of the public;
- 55% felt bullied or harassed because of this work by the members of the public;
- 30% have received some sort of hate mail/email/messages from the public; and

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32 **WHEREAS**, these findings amount to a crisis within the ranks of the public workforce,
33 triggering a significant exodus from the field by many workers and leaders that has
34 further caused staff and resource shortages; and

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36 **WHEREAS**, local health departments have lost between 17% and 31% of their staff
37 since March 2020 due to early retirements and other reasons related to the pandemic;
38 and

1 **WHEREAS**, between 2019 and 2022, total vacancies in local health departments
2 (LHDs) increased by 951 positions across 34 counties due to limited funding, inability to
3 find qualified candidates, and hiring freezes; and

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5 **WHEREAS**, counties are challenged to recruit, retain, and employ new public
6 professionals entering the field because many are drawn to the private for-profit sector
7 and health care systems for work; and

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9 **WHEREAS**, experienced and trained workers will need to replace those who have
10 retired or departed from LHDs due to stressors related to their jobs during the
11 pandemic; and

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13 **WHEREAS**, the broad scope of public threats to our communities, coupled with the
14 deleterious impact of underinvestment on the capabilities and mental health status of
15 our public workforce, demands continued vigilance and continual investment by the
16 state.

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18 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the New York State Association of
19 Counties (NYSAC) calls on the Governor and State Legislature to work with Congress to
20 pass the Public Health Loan Repayment Program, which includes \$25 million to support
21 loan repayment for public professionals who agree to serve three years in a local, state or
22 tribal health department; and

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24 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Governor and Legislature include a one-
25 time, state funded two-year retirement credit for all county health officials who worked
26 during the state of emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic in the FY 2024 State Budget;
27 and

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29 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Governor and Legislature protect and
30 continue to increase Article 6 public infrastructure funding in the FY 2024 state budget;
31 and

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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

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36 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that NYSAC shall forward copies of this resolution to
37 The Governor of the State of New York, the New York State Legislature, NYSDOH
38 Commissioner Mary Bassett, and all others deemed necessary and proper.