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**A Joint Statement from Sarah Ravenhall, Executive Director of the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) and Stephen J. Acquario, Executive Director of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC)**

“The allocation of 400,000 COVID-19 testing kits announced last week by the Governor is a welcome step toward the goal of implementing a robust and successful school testing program in counties implementing the state’s Cluster Action Initiative. However, too much remains unclear for us to move forward effectively. The biggest unresolved question is: Who will provide the staff and resources necessary to administer the tests? Many county health departments have dozens and even hundreds of schools within their jurisdictions but not nearly enough trained and licensed staff to administer the large volume of tests. Test kits are just one part of a much larger array of essential resources that must be deployed to make this work.

“Additionally, we have significant concerns about the capacity of our communities to implement this plan. Local health departments have been working in concert with community-based organizations since the pandemic began, and many of these organizations are at, or even beyond, full capacity. We cannot rely on local partnerships alone to meet our needs. Any plan to implement robust testing in our schools must include adequate state resources and withholding funds from localities will only make this monumental task even more difficult.”

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