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NYSACHO PRESIDENT DR. INDU GUPTA TESTIFIES BEFORE LEGISLATIVE JOINT BUDGET HEARING ON HEALTH

Calls For Support of the “PREPARE Act” To Fund Local Public Health Services

(Albany, New York) Dr. Indu Gupta, New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) President and Onondaga County Health Commissioner, testified at today’s joint legislative hearing on the health section of Governor Hochul’s 2022-23 Executive Budget proposal, calling on leaders to support the Governor’s proposal to increase core (article 6) funding for local health departments, and requesting that additional support be added to the final budget agreement for other critical public health services that remain underfunded.

Dr Gupta testified: “Entering this budget session in year two of the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic, I see an early promise of renewed energy and significant opportunities for public health. We appreciate the Executive’s proposed budget, which will provide an overdue increase to article 6 state aid funding and help our state better prepare for any future public health emergencies, at the same time it will allow us to do our core public health work to protect the health of our communities. We ask for your support to keep this proposal in the final budget negotiations. We also respectfully urge you to make bold new funding additions to support the ability of local health departments to protect the health of all New York residents via prevention and population-based strategies.”

Earlier this year, NYSACHO proposed the *Public Health Reinvestment and Emergency Pandemic Adaptability, Readiness, and Efficiency Act*, the PREPARE act. An article 6 funding increase was one of several provisions of the Act, leaving many other provisions in need of inclusion in final budget agreement. Those unfunded PREPARE Act elements include:

- \$30.3 million in child lead poisoning prevention funding to support numerous activities mandated by 2019 state legislation that appropriately lowered the acceptable blood lead level for children but provided no additional funding to support the numerous on-the-ground activities necessary to implement the new policy.
- \$53.4 million for medical examiner activities. Pathology and toxicology services are a critical public health activity. While the popular view of these services focuses on investigations

related to criminal activity, under New York state statute, coroners or medical examiners have jurisdiction and authority to investigate every suspicious or unattended death within their county.

- \$60 million to restore NYC's article 6 state aid from 20% to 36%.
- Allow local health departments to claim their full county fringe reimbursement rate.

In concluding her testimony, Dr. Gupta said: "We respectfully ask you to invest in the public health infrastructure and programming as outlined in the PREPARE Act. Thank you for your leadership and support for public health, and your partnership in protecting and improving the health of all New Yorkers."

The complete PREPARE Act can be found at: https://www.nysacho.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/PREPARE-Act-Canva_12.22.21.pdf.

Dr. Gupta's full formal testimony can be found at: <https://www.nysacho.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NYSACHO-SFY-22-23-Budget-Testimony-Final.pdf>.

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