



# NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY HEALTH OFFICIALS

*Leading the Way to Healthier Communities*

## NYSACHO 2023-2024 Legislative Platform

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (“NYSACHO”) is a membership association of the 58 local health departments in New York State. Through provision of technical assistance and training, NYSACHO supports the work local health departments (LHDs) do to implement the New York State Prevention Agenda priorities.

NYSACHO acts as an advocate for LHDs in the legislative and regulatory arenas, by supporting data driven, evidence-supported legislative and regulatory public health policy and solutions and requesting direct state funding to LHDs for implemented and pending public health policy. The legislative agenda for NYSACHO encompasses five key public health principles as well as working on specific legislative priorities in seven public health areas: (1) Disease Control, (2) Environmental Health, (3) Family Health, (4) Rural Health, (5) Workforce Development/Funding, (6) Emerging Public Health Threats, and (7) Substance Use/Cannabis Policy. Below is a summary of our main issues in each of these categories. (Call out supporting funding for public health).

All NYSACHO’s committee policy priorities align with five overarching key principles, as follows:

### Key Principle: Promoting Health Equity

NYSACHO supports public policy that addresses systemic and structural barriers to assuring fair and just access to good health for all people.

### Key Principle: Full Funding for Policy Implementation

NYSACHO opposes the enactment of state public health policy changes that fail to anticipate and fully fund local public health workforce, enforcement, and other needs necessary to ensure successful implementation of new or expanded public health policies and programs.

### Key Principle: Protecting Local Public Health Authority

NYSACHO opposes the preemption of home rule and local public health authorities necessary to respond to community-level public health needs.

### Key Principle: Assuring equitable policies for all Local Health Departments

NYSACHO supports that public policy proposals assess for statewide applicability for all local health departments prior to enacting any legislation that would statutorily include or exclude a single or limited group of local health departments in regard to new or expanded responsibilities, authorities and/or access to funding, data or other resources.

## Key Principle: Modernizing and Improving Data Systems and Access

- NYSACHO supports public policy that improves and modernizes public health data surveillance systems and ensures bidirectional flow of data to strengthen local access to real-time data to inform public health interventions.

## NYSACHO Legislative Priorities by Subject Area

In accordance with the key public health principles, NYSACHO works on legislative priorities in seven public health areas as follows:

### Disease Control

NYSACHO supports comprehensive national and statewide disease and infection control policies and measures aimed to:

- Strengthen local health departments capacity to prevent and control chronic and infectious disease.
- Protect communities from communicable disease transmission.
- Support robust systems for monitoring disease trends.
- Enhance infection control practices in clinical health care and other community settings.
- Increase population-based immunization rates for all Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (“ACIP”) recommended vaccinations.
- Ensure and increase access to disease control interventions, screenings, and treatment options to reduce disparities in chronic and infectious diseases.
- Reduce the incidence of chronic diseases through prevention by enacting policies that improve nutrition and food security, increase physical activity, and prevent tobacco use.
- Decrease rates of sexually transmitted infections, vector borne illness and other emerging communicable diseases.
- Strengthen capacity for the monumental role local health departments play in emergency response efforts around disease-based threats to public health.
- Combat misinformation and spread evidence-based information to the public about the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

### Environmental Health

NYSACHO supports Environmental Health related legislation and policies that:

- Strengthen local enforcement authority, funding and eliminate statutory or regulatory loopholes to ensure compliance with public health laws.
- Protect communities from food, water, air, or vector-borne disease transmission.
- Reduce and mitigate exposure to environmental contaminants, including lead.
- Enhance safety practices in regulated community settings; and
- Ensure fair processes in enforcement actions.
- Indemnify local public health officials from liability when attempts to enforce Public Health Laws are blocked by violator(s) for non-compliance or legal processes.

## Family Health

NYSACHO supports Family, Child and Maternal Health legislation and policies that:

- Mitigate health impacts and supports treatment and recovery options for pregnant persons who use drugs and children born to persons who use drugs.
- Increase access to and insurer coverage of comprehensive high-quality reproductive and maternal health services, including behavioral health services.
- Ensure fair and full access for everyone to comprehensive family planning services.
- Ensure the confidentiality of reproductive health data and protect provider and patient confidentiality.
- Promote breastfeeding and the rights of breastfeeding persons.
- Support the strengthening and building of healthy families, including initiatives that foster adolescent and adult male familial involvement.
- Promote and fund local health departments' provision of evidence-based maternal and child health home visiting services.
- Increase resources for and recognition of oral health as a critical public health program.
- Increase provider capacity for early intervention services for children (ages 0-3) and preschool education services for children with special needs (ages 3-5) through competitive reimbursement rates and expansion of professional titles eligible to provide services; and
- Promote cost-savings, efficiencies, and collaborations between governmental entities providing and funding transportation and other services to children.

## Rural Health

NYSACHO supports legislation and policies designed to address the unique public health challenges of rural communities to:

- Strengthen access to emergency medical services in rural/underserved communities.
- Restore budget funding to rural health networks.
- Address barriers to access to care and other services unique to rural environments.
- Ensure equitable distribution of funds to rural areas with lower population density than urban counterparts.
- Recognize and address health disparities specific to rural populations.
- Address workforce shortages and barriers to hiring in rural communities.

## Workforce Development/Funding

NYSACHO supports legislation and policies that promote a strong public health infrastructure to:

- Ensure any new or expanded state-imposed statutory requirements are fully funded.
- Invest in the local public health workforce and infrastructure, including competitive compensation for professional or licensed required positions.
- Ensure that policies addressing healthcare workforce shortages include public health.
- Provide equitable resources for all local health departments.
- Streamline administrative requirements to reduce barriers to providing public health services.
- Provide flexible funding to allow deployment of resources to meet local public health needs and threats.

- Address statutory and regulatory barriers to hiring and retaining a qualified workforce including modernization of civil service requirements.
- Assure good stewardship of all taxpayer funds supporting the provision of public health services.

### Emerging Public Health Threats

NYSACHO supports legislation and policies that addressing emerging public health threats and issues, including those that:

- Improve access to information, funding and other resources to local health departments necessary to assure the health and safety of migrant asylum seekers residing/relocating within New York State.
- Ensure the inclusion of local governmental public health experts in the development, review, and implementation of legislation in response to emerging public health threats, including the effects of weather events and monitoring the changes and trends impacting the health and wellbeing of the population.
- Strengthen and support medical examiner, coroner, and forensic pathology systems in their work to identify cause of death to help inform prevention approaches, particularly in the instance of unattended deaths, deaths caused by overdose, communicable disease, and suicide.

### Substance Use/Cannabis Implementation

NYSACHO supports legislation that reduces preventable death and substance misuse through policies that:

- Prioritize public health and safety, including preventing misuse, amid the roll out of adult use cannabis regulations.
- Protect youth from engaging in underage substance use, with a focus on addressing industry marketing efforts targeting youth.
- Align statute between tobacco and cannabis marketing regulations to the most protective restrictions for populations that are most adversely impacted by misuse.
- Establish real-time data collection systems for cannabis use patterns, health outcomes, and regulatory compliance.
- Take a non-punitive, human-centered approach to addressing the overdose crisis.
- Increase access to harm reduction supplies and services that reduce the risk of overdose fatalities (i.e., Naloxone) and the transmission of infectious diseases (i.e., sterile syringes).
- Ensure equitable access to treatment and recovery services; and
- Further substance use prevention programming without stigmatizing people who use drugs and substances.
- Promote office and community-based screening (and reimbursement when applicable) for substance use, especially among youth and young adults.