SUPPORTS

A6866/S.653-A (Paulin/Krueger)
AN ACT to allow diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmissible diseases, including appropriate vaccinations, of minors under the age of eighteen without parental consent.

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) supports the above-referenced legislative proposal which would extend treatment of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) to minors under eighteen years of age. This legislation would also provide for administration of vaccinations that can prevent transmission of sexually transmissible infections.

Sexually transmissible diseases and infections remain a public health problem for adolescents in New York State. Almost half of all new sexually transmissible infections (STIs) occur among individuals aged 15-21. New York State rates for chlamydia, gonorrhea, and primary and secondary syphilis continue to rise, and the highest STI rates continue to be among young people. According to 2020 surveillance data from the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), chlamydia continues to be the most common reportable STI in New York State, with the highest rates found in the 15–24-year-old female population. Excluding NYC, gonorrhea rates increased by 45% from 2019 to 2020 and by age group, rates were again, highest among females ages 15-24, with rates of 636.9 per 100,000 for 15–19-year-old females.

Further, other highly prevalent STIs, including HPV, are often unreported, so the burden of disease is likely much higher. HPV infections are associated with cervical and other types of cancers, but the HPV vaccine has helped to reduce incidence of HPV cases and associated cancers since its introduction. Undiagnosed STIs often occur because individuals lack awareness about reproductive health, lack access to care, or because minors are concerned that information about sexual activity, testing, diagnosis and treatment will be shared with their parents.

Left untreated, STDs can cause long-term health consequences, especially in females; the CDC estimates that annually at least 24,000 women across the United States become infertile because of undiagnosed or untreated STDs. Sexually transmissible diseases that go untreated can also cause other reproductive health issues and cancer. In addition, individuals who are unaware of their status may transmit the disease to others.

NYSACHO supports this legislation, which will reduce barriers to preventive care for sexual health, testing and treatment of diseases for minors, reduce the spread of these infections and prevent short and long-term health consequences for adolescents while assuring protections for providers regarding scope of practice requirements.

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