

# Warren County Board of Supervisors

## RESOLUTION NO. 724 OF 2022

**RESOLUTION INTRODUCED BY SUPERVISORS SEEBER, HOGAN, BRAYMER, LEGGETT AND DRISCOLL**

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF ADDRESSING COVID'S IMPACT ON THE LOW MORALE AND EXODUS OF PROFESSIONALS FROM NEW YORK'S PUBLIC WORKFORCE THROUGH THE ISSUANCE OF WORKFORCE BONUSES, STIPENDS, AND ENHANCED RETIREMENT BENEFITS TO SUSTAIN THE STATE'S PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented historic challenges to the response capabilities of public first responders, and

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

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

WHEREAS, a consortium of researchers from the New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO), the State University of New York (SUNY) Oneonta, Bassett Healthcare Network Research, and Utica University convened to conduct a statewide survey of public workers and compiled the findings in a report entitled "Pain and Perseverance," and

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

WHEREAS, the survey data indicates:

- 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

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

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

WHEREAS, between 2019 and 2022, total vacancies in local health departments (LHDs) increases

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by 951 positions across 34 counties due to limited funding, inability to find qualified candidates, and hiring freezes, and

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

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

WHEREAS, the broad scope of public threats to our communities, coupled with the deleterious impact of under investment on the capabilities and mental health status of our public workforce, demands continued vigilance and continual investment by the state, now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the Warren County Board of Supervisors hereby calls on the Governor and State Legislature to work with Congress to pass the Public Health Loan Repayment Program, which includes \$25 million dollars to support loan repayment for public professionals who agree to serve three years in a local, state or tribal health department, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Governor and Legislature include a one-time, state funded two-year retirement credit for all county health officials who worked during the state of emergency for the COVID-19 pandemic in the FY 2024 State Budget, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Governor and Legislature protect and continue to increase Article 6 public infrastructure funding in the FY 2024 State Budget, and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors shall forward copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of New York, the New York State Legislature, New York State Department of Health Commissioner Mary Bassett, and all others deemed necessary and proper.