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HEALTH COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A meeting of the Health Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on March 24, 2022 via Zoom and in-person.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Leslie Kennedy, Chairperson
Leg. Stephanie Bontempi, Vice Chair
Leg. Bridget Fleming (excused absence)
Leg. Tom Donnelly (excused absence)
Leg. Dominick Thorne (via Zoom)
Leg. Manuel Esteban

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

William Duffy, Counsel to the Legislature
Frank Tassone, Clerk of the Legislature
Brett Robinson, Chief Deputy Clerk/Legislature
Craig Freas, Budget Review Office
Gay Vogel-Campisi, Aide to Leg. Kennedy
Brendan Sweeney, Aide to PO
Ali Nazir, Aide to PO
Jennifer Culp, Assistant to Commissioner Pigott
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 3:10 PM

CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:

Okay. I call the meeting of the Health Committee to order. We apologize that we are late. We were in executive session at Ways & Means. Legislator Bontempi, to say the Pledge of Allegiance, please.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Could we stand for a moment of silence for those who are fighting for freedom in the Ukraine and for all those in the military who have fought for freedom anywhere in the world.

MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED

Thank you. Please be seated. We have two excused absences, Legislator Fleming and Legislator Donnelly.

Mr. Clerk, could you call the roll.

(Roll call by Mr. Brett Robinson, Chief Deputy Clerk)

CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:

Present.

LEG. BONTEMPI:

Present.

LEG. THORNE:

Present.

LEG. ESTEBAN:

Present.

CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:

Four. **(LEGISLATORS FLEMING, DONNELLY - EXCUSED ABSENCES)**

CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:

Okay, so we do have a quorum. Do we have any correspondence, Mr. Clerk?

CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:

No, Madam Chairwoman.

CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:

Okay. Do we have anyone to speak at the public portion? Not seeing anyone, we can move on.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

We have no appointment resolutions, no presentations, no tabled resolutions. So that leaves us to Introductory Resolutions. First one is 1196, **Accepting \$302,000 and appropriating \$39,260 13% Federal pass-through and \$262,740, (which is) 87% New York State Grant funds from the New York State Department of Health for the**

1 **Immunization Action Plan "IAP" administered by the Suffolk County**
2 **Department of Health (Services) and to execute grant related**
3 **agreements. (Co. Exec.). Do we have a motion?**

4
5 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

6 On the motion.

7
8 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

9 On the motion. I'll make the motion. Do we have a second?

03:13PM 10
11 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**

12 I second the motion.

13
14 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

15 Okay.

16
17 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

18 So, on the motion, so it says here that the IAP aims to completely
19 immunize children in Suffolk County by their second birthday. So
03:13PM 20 my question is are COVID vaccines part of this program? So, I
21 don't know if someone can answer that question.

22
23 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

24 Is there anyone from -- oh, yes, there is someone. Hi, Jennifer.
25 Miss Culp, can you answer this question?

26
27 **MS. CULP:**

28 Yes. Good afternoon, everyone. Jen Culp from Suffolk County
29 Department of Health Services. We do offer COVID vaccines at our
03:13PM 30 IAP clinics as, you know, a way to easily increase access to
31 families who may be looking for those immunizations.

32
33 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

34 And I guess my next question is how will that be promoted? I don't
35 know if promoted is the correct word, but I do know that many
36 families are very hesitant to inoculate their very young so I'm not
37 saying it's good or bad; I'm just saying how will this information
38 be presented?

39
40 **MS. CULP:**

41 Sure. So this is a longstanding program. It is really, you know,
42 we will serve everyone but it is really geared to our uninsured and
43 underinsured populations. We have regular clinics that are on our
44 website on a health calendar. And we go throughout the County. We
45 partner with several libraries. We partner with some of our
46 community-based organizations. So this month, for example, we're
47 at the Mastic Firehouse; we're in Bay Shore; we're in Riverhead,
48 West Babylon. So if you have areas, you know, that you would like
49 us to hit, please let us know (inaudible) throughout.

03:14PM 50
51 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

52 So I think I probably didn't express myself clearly. I'm thinking
53 more about the population that maybe would not like their under-two
54 to be vaccinated so that there's not too much maybe of a push so
55 that parents truly feel that it is their choice to do what they
56 feel is best for their child, I guess --

1
2 **MS. CULP:**

3 I'm not sure I'm understanding your question.
4

5 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

6 You know, I guess really what I'm trying to say -- yeah, I'm
7 probably not communicating my question properly. I guess is --
8 because it's been such a controversial topic for a while with the
9 very, very young. So I would hope that there's information out
03:15PM 10 there for parents, but that the information is not maybe -- is
11 pushed or promoted too much so that parents don't feel too much
12 pressure. Maybe that's how I should say it.
13

14 **MS. CULP:**

15 Understood. Right. So most families that utilize our clinics in
16 the past obviously were coming in for the regular schedule of
17 childhood immunizations. So your -- you know, your measles, your
18 mumps, polio, rubella. When families do come into us, we do let
19 them know about the availability of a COVID vaccine. We'll answer
03:16PM 20 any questions that they may have. We have nurses. A nurse
21 practitioner is on-site. But, of course, that is a family's
22 decision whether or not they vaccinate their child or families. We
23 also work really closely with the school districts. So a lot of
24 times it is a school-age child that might be coming who's not
25 caught up in terms of, you know, what's required at that point.
26

27 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

28 Thank you.
29

30 **MS. CULP:**

31 Sure.
32

33 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

34 Okay, Mr. Clerk, can you call the roll?
35

36 **CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:**

37 Legislator Kennedy?
38

39 **LEG. THORNE:**

03:17PM 40 Madam Chair? Madam Chair, I had a question on the motion.
41

42 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

43 Oh, sorry, Dominick. I didn't see you, sorry.
44

45 **LEG. THORNE:**

46 That's all right. A little hard on Zoom. Jennifer, thank you so
47 much for being with us today. Once again, I never kill the
48 messenger but I am one of those folks that want some questions
49 answered on some of these things. So this Immunization Action
03:17PM 50 Plan, I guess the most direct way, I'll be straight up with the
51 question so there's no confusion is, do these folks go and sign a
52 blank immunization authorization form or are we saying "if you're
53 going to use our services, you have to have the COVID-19 vaccine"
54 or anything like that?
55
56

1 **MS. CULP:**

2 No, no, no. So, the goal of the IAP program, this is a
3 longstanding program in the State of New York that is run by local
4 health departments. And the goal is really to increase access to
5 our families for childhood immunizations. And our goal is to have
6 children fully immunized by the age of two. And those are our
7 basic immunizations. Those are our chicken pox, our measles, our
8 mumps, rubella, polio. And then we also will connect them if we
9 find that they don't have a medical home so obviously they're
03:18PM 10 coming to us for a reason, you know, get them into a pediatrician's
11 office for further care.

12
13 But when families come, you know, they may come for one particular
14 shot. They may come for a whole series, but, yes, we go over
15 what's required. But it is ultimately families that are
16 responsible for choosing, you know, which vaccinations they want to
17 have their child take at that point. The COVID vaccine is
18 available out of Access. And if families would like it, it is
19 there.

03:18PM 20
21 **LEG. THORNE:**

22 Outstanding. Thank you. Thank you for your answer. Again, I just
23 need to make sure that we're not mandating anybody. Medical
24 freedom is medical freedom to use a vaccine or not to in that
25 particular case. And as far as you giving vaccinations to maybe
26 folks that are not caught up, you know, listen my kid has mumps,
27 rubella and measles and all that other vaccines. Do we always
28 respect the parents' wishes, "hey, I want to do one shot this week
29 and one shot next week"? Is that something that you guys
03:19PM 30 facilitate up there if they choose to spread them out a little bit?

31
32 **MS. CULP:**

33 That's my understanding, yes.

34
35 **LEG. THORNE:**

36 Okay, thank you so much. Madam Chair, I yield back. I appreciate
37 the time.

38
39 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

03:19PM 40 Thank you, Legislator Thorne. Mr. Clerk, can you call the roll?
41 Hold on.

42
43 **CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:**

44 Legislator Kennedy?

45
46 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

47 Wait, hold on, hold on. Go ahead.

48
49 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**

50 I'm waiting for her.

51
52 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

53 She's coming back on.

54
55 **MS. CULP:**

56 Sorry.

1
2 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**

3 Oh, thank you for your presentation. Yes, I guess one of them is
4 more of a comment, if we can be sure that, you know, the
5 information is being provided in several languages, in plain
6 English to people, you know, in twelve point font or an appropriate
7 font that they can read so they truly understand they have a choice
8 in these and what the risks are and what the benefits are right,
9 right?

03:20PM 10

11 The other question I have is if you could educate me a little bit
12 about the subvariant I've been reading about, the BA, how prevalent
13 is this in Long Island at this time, in Suffolk County? Do you see
14 that growing? And are the current boosters and vaccines just as
15 effective with the subvariants as they were with, you know, the
16 other sort of COVID variance that we've been dealing with?
17

18 **MS. CULP:**

19 You know, I can certainly have the Commissioner get back to you in
20 regards to those questions with our new variants. You know,
21 typically that is something that's looked at at state and federal
22 data. And, you know, we kind of extrapolate here on Long Island.
23 So, you know, we're certainly keeping a close eye on our case
24 trends. We have been seeing slight increases, but nothing of too
25 concern -- too much of a concern at this point, but we are
26 watching. But I'll certainly have him, you know, get back with
27 your further questions.
28

03:20PM 20

29 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**

30 Thank you.

03:21PM 30

31
32 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

33 Thank you. Okay, hopefully the third time will be a charm. Mr.
34 Clerk, could you call the roll?
35

36 (Roll call by Mr. Brett Robinson, Chief Deputy Clerk)
37

38 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

39 Yes.
40

03:21PM 40

41 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**

42 Yes.
43

44 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

45 Yes.
46

47 **LEG. THORNE:**

48 Yes.
49

50 **CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:**

51 Four. (VOTE: 4-0-0-2/LEGISLATORS FLEMING, DONNELLY NOT PRESENT)
52

53 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

54 Thank you. So IR 1196 is approved. IR 1197, Accepting and
55 appropriating additional 100% Federal pass-through grant funds from
56 Health Research, Inc in the amount of \$2,000,000 for an expansion

1 of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Program COVID-19
2 {Epidemiologist} and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Disease
3 "ELC" administered by the Suffolk County Department of Health
4 Services, Division of Public Health (and) to execute grant related
5 agreements. (Co. Exec.). Do we have a motion? Okay, I'll make the
6 motion. Do we have a second?

7
8 **LEG. THORNE:**
9 I'll second the motion, Madam Chair.

10
11 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
12 Thank you, Legislator Thorne. Anybody have any questions?

13
14 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**
15 On the motion.

16
17 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
18 Go ahead.

19
20 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**
21 Madam Chair. So, I'm sorry I'm asking lots of question today. I'm
22 going to try to be a little clearer now. In the proposed
23 resolution here, it says the monies goes to preparedness with a
24 focus on enhanced detection surveillance and prevention of
25 COVID-19. That word scares me a little bit.

26
27 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
28 Surveillance?

29
30 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**
31 Surveillance. To me that's a little alarming and it sounds a
32 little "big brother" so I don't know if we can get an explanation
33 of that word? If maybe there's a better term?

34
35 **MS. CULP:**
36 Sure. I mean, that is the name of the funding stream that comes
37 down from New York State DOH and the federal government. This is a
38 long -- well, not longstanding, but this is -- we've had this grant
39 since, you know, just after COVID began and it really supports the
40 work that we have done and continue to do around COVID each day.
41 So this funding has been applied to staffing for case
42 investigation; for our mask vax sites back in the day; now for our
43 smaller vaccination pods that we still are running. They also, you
44 know, support the purchase of various PPE, other equipment we may
45 have used like refrigerators. So it really just was a way for
46 local Health Departments to get additional funding to support our
47 COVID response efforts. And this is an additional two million that
48 just came down.

49
50 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**
51 And, again, all the things you said are, you know, beautiful and
52 wonderful and obviously those things had to be done. But, again, I
53 don't really know where the word "surveillance" comes in. I'm
54 still having a problem with that word.

1 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

2 Can I answer?

3

4 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

5 Please, please, please.

6

7 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

8 As a nurse for 30 years? Surveillance is not a dirty word. It's
9 used with if you're in the hospital and your doctor calls three
10 days after you're out and says, "Mrs. Jones, how are you feeling,
11 how's your temperature?" Ba, ba, ba, ba. And as a decision to come
12 in for, you know, another doctor's visit. And with infectious
13 diseases, the same deal is true. It's not -- you know, they're not
14 tracking you down in the middle of the night.

03:24PM

15
16 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

17 Okay, maybe it's a language issue then. All right.

18

19 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

20 Yeah.

21

22 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**

23 Thank you.

24

25 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

26 Yes. Legislator Thorne?

27

28 **LEG. THORNE:**

29 Hello, Madam Chair, yet again, you got two people ask a lot of
30 questions so I apologize, Jennifer. It's just an area has been a
31 hot button lately so we want to make sure all the answers are out
32 and on public record. So I really appreciate your time and
33 patience with us. This money is earmarked for a program for COVID
34 response. So at the end of it we don't use it or we've already
35 used it, we've already spent it, like, and, you know, the next time
36 H1M1 or {FOLI} or whatever the latest threat comes in, is that
37 money gonna go into a special earmarked fund for response to
38 pandemics or countywide epidemics?

03:25PM

39
40 **MS. CULP:**

41 Yeah, I mean, that's a great question and I think it's one that's
42 definitely been happening across the state level. As, you know,
43 funding continues to come down for COVID and we're continuing to,
44 of course, keep up our comprehensive response but obviously things
45 are changing; our case numbers are coming down; everyone's talking
46 about moving to more of an emergent, you know, kind of handling.
47 So there has been a discussion about if these funds may in the
48 future be available for other just emergency preparedness planning
49 in general and other sources; you know, put it, like you mentioned,
50 flu or just planning exercises, increasing the public health
51 workforce. All of those ideas have been discussed. Right now the
52 deliverables on this grant are very specific to COVID.

03:26PM

53
54 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**

55 Okay.

56

1 **MS. CULP:**
2 So those conversations are happening.

3
4 **LEG. THORNE:**
5 Okay. So -- all right. I think you answered my questions. I
6 yield back, Madam Chair. Thank you.

7
8 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
9 Thank you. I'm going to also ask that whoever made the motion --
03:26PM 10 who made the motion? Was that -- me. Put it on consent calendar.
11 It's 100% federal funding. Mr. Clerk, would you call the roll?

12
13 (Roll call by Mr. Brett Robinson, Chief Deputy Clerk)

14
15 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
16 Yes.

17
18 **LEG. THORNE:**
19 Yes.

03:27PM 20
21 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**
22 Yes.

23
24 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**
25 Yes.

26
27 **CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:**
28 Four. (VOTE: 4-0-0-2/LEGISLATORS FLEMING, DONNELLY NOT
29 PRESENT/CONSENT CALENDAR)

03:27PM 30
31 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
32 Thank you. IR 1197 is approved. IR 1199, Amending the 2022
33 Adopted Operating Budget to reallocate 100% State Aid from the New
34 York State Office of Mental Health and New York State OMH for
35 various contract agencies. (Co. Exec.). I'll do the motion and we
36 can put this on the consent calendar also.

37
38 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**
39 I second it.

40
41 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
42 You second? Thank you. Okay, roll call, please.

43
44 (Roll call by Mr. Brett Robinson, Chief Deputy Clerk)

45
46 **CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:**
47 Yes.

48
49 **LEG. ESTEBAN:**
03:28PM 50 Yes.

51
52 **LEG. BONTEMPI:**
53 Yes.

54
55 **LEG. THORNE:**
56 Yes for the co-sponsor.

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CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK ROBINSON:
Four. (VOTE: 4-0-0-2/LEGISLATORS FLEMING, DONNELLY NOT
PRESENT/CONSENT CALENDAR)

CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:
So IR 1199 is approved. And anybody have any more questions? No?
Good. So seeing no more business in front of us, this meeting is
adjourned. Thank you.

LEG. THORNE:
Have a good day, folks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON KENNEDY:
You, too.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 3:28 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**

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