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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NASSAU AND SUFFOLK COUNTY VILLAGE OFFICIALS ASSOCIATIONS
PUSH FOR CHANGES IN GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL TO LEGALIZE
RECREATIONAL USE OF CANNABIS IN NEW YORK STATE**

(March 11, 2019) In a joint meeting of the Nassau County Village Officials Association (NCVOA) and the Suffolk County Village Officials Association (SCVOA) that took place on March 6th, village mayors expressed serious concerns about Governor Cuomo's proposed legislation to legalize the recreational use of cannabis in New York State.

Simply stated, the Executive Boards of both NCVOA and SCVOA strongly oppose this ill-conceived legislation.

"Legalizing the recreational use of marijuana is wrong on two counts," said SCVOA President and Village of Nissequogue Mayor Richard B. Smith. "First and foremost, as Long Island and Suffolk County are in the midst of a horrible opioid crisis, legalizing yet another drug is just going to exacerbate the problems we're having and lead to a lot more human suffering and additional cost. Secondly, precluding whether villages and towns can opt-in or opt-out is a great disservice to our citizens."

"If passed, the proposed legislation will negatively affect almost every aspect of village life from economics to public health to law enforcement," said NCVOA President and Village of Farmingdale Mayor Ralph Ekstrand. "NCVOA is steadfast in our opposition to this unwise and harmful legislation."

NCVOA and SCVOA join many other New York State-based organizations in law enforcement, health and education in their opposition to this proposed law:

President of the Medical Society of The State of New York Dr. Thomas Madejski: "We have many different intoxicants in our society, none of them are particularly helpful, and I think adding one more is not in society's interest."

Pediatrician and leader of the NYS branch of the American Academy of Pediatrics Dr. Henry Neilley: "Even at 21, kids' brains are not fully mature and they are at higher risk...The biggest one is cognitive effects on the brain, and not only the younger they are when they start but the more they use marijuana, there is a long-term health risk involved."

President of the NYS Sheriffs' Association Sheriff Robert Maciol: "We took an oath as sheriffs of New York state to keep our communities safe, and by legalizing marijuana, we will become less safe."

If this law does pass, the villages have a number of serious concerns and specific recommendations:

1. At a bare minimum, the State should delay implementation to fully vet the impact of the proposed law and to clarify and modify some of its provisions. Also, other states have important provisions that are not in the proposed law.
2. As in other states, this legislation should be voted upon by the public.
3. The proposed law gives opt out power to counties. However, only towns and villages – not counties – are given the power under state law to regulate permitted and prohibited uses of land through their zoning power. For that reason and others, towns and villages should have the power to opt out.
4. Nassau and Suffolk Counties should opt out for a number of reasons including: costs to implement the law will far exceed revenue (and, as proposed, there will be no revenue to villages and towns); health and accident risks will increase significantly; and opting out will diminish use even if the cannabis can be purchased elsewhere.
5. The propose law should require a local share of revenue to help defray the significant costs of implementing the law, even if they opt out, such as police protection and training, ambulance and first responder costs and training, and code enforcement.
6. The proposed law should ban certain forms of marijuana, such as marijuana in the form of candy and chewable foods, and other forms that might be child-friendly.
7. The proposed law should require businesses to comply with local zoning and business operation regulations (e.g., hours and manner of sale) and should permit villages and towns to restrict public use.
8. The proposed law should require that the State provide advance notice to all affected jurisdictions of any applications affecting their jurisdiction or near its boundaries, and give them time and ability to comment.

NCVOA and SCVOA are urging all local municipalities and other organizations and individuals that are in agreement with this position to voice their concerns to the Governor and their state legislators.

About the Nassau County Village Officials Association: *Founded in 1925, the Nassau County Village Officials Association (NCVOA), representing all of Nassau County's 64 villages and 450,000 residents, is dedicated to providing village officials with a forum for exchanging ideas and experiences in the administration of their municipal duties; developing educational programs and conferences to assist village officials with implementing their civic responsibilities; studying and discussing various activities and actions that will benefit the public safety, health and welfare of our member villages; and investigating and discussing the most efficient means and methods of village government.*

About the Suffolk County Village Officials Association: *Since 1934, the Suffolk County Village Officials Association (SCVOA) has worked to support and advocate on behalf of the villages of Suffolk County, as well as to provide an information resource on all matters and issues of concern to the villages. SCVOA's primary purpose is to create a strong, effective, cohesive organization that serves the more than 125,000 Suffolk County village residents by promoting an exchange of ideas and strategies that enable village government.*