



NYSPHA Policy and Advocacy (PAC) Highlights – 2018

Last year the New York State Public Health Association's Policy and Advocacy Committee had an exciting and productive year. Throughout the legislative session our monthly calls were well attended with robust discussion in existing and new areas of focus. Workgroups were created to explore preventing gun violence and enacting universal healthcare.

Overview of 2018 NYSPHA PAC activities:

- ❖ Developed the 2018 NYSPHA Legislative Agenda
- ❖ Mobilized members to stop proposed cuts to the State Department of Health budget
- ❖ Used Twitter to educate and promote health policies
- ❖ Met with partner health organizations to gather information and collaborate
- ❖ Drafted Tobacco 21 and gun violence position papers
- ❖ Held a collaborative Day at the Capitol for members to advocate for health policy
- ❖ Signed on to or wrote support memos for several health policy measures
- ❖ Wrote comments opposing State Education changes that would weaken teacher health education requirements
- ❖ Began meeting with the Public Health Association of New York City leaders to determine how we will work together and maintain ongoing policy and advocacy efforts in the city after we merge in early 2019.

Results

For the second year in a row, our top policy priority was Increasing the legal age of tobacco and electronic cigarette sales to 21 (T21). Health groups did make good progress in the Assembly picking up new sponsors and nearly passing it in that chamber. The Senate version of the bill was another story. However, with the coming change of leadership, from Republican to Democrats, the state bill should have a better chance in 2019. At the local level, T21 continues to demonstrate strong support in all regions of the state with 24 localities and 17 Counties plus NYC having now passed it covering at least 75% of the population. Most recently, T21 Westchester, Putnam, and Essex Counties adopted the legislation to protect youth.

In Albany County, NYSPHA supported the Tobacco Free Pharmacy bill which passed to become only the fourth locality to adopt it in the state (not including NYC where it was first passed). The law prohibits the sale of tobacco and e-cigarettes not only in pharmacies but in all stores that contain a pharmacy such as Walmart and supermarkets.

We look forward to working together in 2019 to hopefully pass T21 statewide and make progress on a range of other bills that help us achieve our mission of improving the Public's health.