

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECOGNIZED FOR SUCCESS IN LIMITING THE SPREAD OF MEASLES

New York State Department of Health Marked End of the Measles Outbreak

(White Plains, NY) – At a reception hosted by the New York State Department of Health, the Westchester County Health Department was honored for successfully preventing measles from spreading in Westchester County.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, and more than 25 Health Department staff members including nurses, physicians, administrators, educators, clinic staff, communicators, an epidemiologist and support staff, were congratulated and presented with a token commemorating the state and local partnership at the ceremony in White Plains.

Brad Hutton, Deputy Commissioner for Public Health for the New York State Department of Health, noted that the outbreak began Oct. 1, 2018 with a visitor to Rockland County and ended Sept. 25, 2019 – “a mere six days before the deadline in which the United States would lose its measles elimination status.”

Eighteen Westchester County residents were confirmed to have had measles, and most had not been vaccinated against the disease, Hutton said. He noted that during the year ending Oct. 3, 406 people were infected with measles in Rockland, Orange, Sullivan and Westchester as a result of initial exposures from international travel, and that during that year, County health officials had administered nearly 85,000 MMR vaccines.

Speaking on behalf of State Health Commissioner Howard Zucker, Hutton said: “We’re here today to recognize the heroic, compassionate and unstinting work of Westchester County health officials – Commissioner Sherlita Amler and her remarkable team – who reached out to their community, engaged them and educated them, to stop one of the world’s most contagious disease from spreading.”

Hutton recapped the effort that went into ending the outbreak during long nights, weekends and holidays. County officials kept tabs on dozens of people who were exposed to the virus, visited or called them daily

throughout the 21-day incubation period, reviewed thousands of school immunization records, and worked closely with the state, local doctors, school administrators and rabbis.

County Executive George Latimer said: “Most of the time the work you do is unappreciated because people don’t realize what could happen. I’m very happy to stand behind this Department and have professionals like you make the right decisions.”

Amler thanked Latimer and his staff for their support, the State Health Department for their cooperation, and her staff for their hard work and dedication: “You have helped protect the safety and well-being of limitless people and that should make you feel good.”

Amler thanked Latimer for signing a vaccine bill into law in September that strengthens the County Health Department’s ability to prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. The amended law empowers the Westchester County Board of Health and the Commissioner of Health to issue orders, adopt provisions of the health code and take other measures to prevent the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases. The measure took effect immediately.

Amler and the Board of Health sought the change to improve their ability to limit the spread of disease, following the largest statewide measles outbreak in decades.

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About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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