



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

KRISTIN M. PROUD
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor, New York State
Capitol Building
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

There comes a time when the baton should be passed in this marathon journey that we call public service in New York State. With a fierce dedication to the public's health, I have carried it through many a crisis in the last seven years and five months and placed the welfare of our residents at the forefront of all things, professional and personal. Though we continue to address new quagmires related to the pandemic, from issues of booster shots to legal challenges regarding vaccine mandates, I believe that in *our* particular state the most difficult aspects of this may be behind us.

With almost 75% of the state's population age 18 and older fully vaccinated, we are at the point of trying to 'normalize' living with this, now seemingly endemic, infectious disease, as we have done with other illnesses for which immunizations benefit the individual and the community. The one important unresolved aspect is the need for pediatric vaccinations which I see happening in the near future.

I therefore tender my resignation as Commissioner of Health for the State of New York and will work to help provide for a smooth transition. Though often we hear the words - it has been a true privilege to serve the people of this state - I take that maxim to heart. For there is nothing more precious than brightening tomorrow by improving the lives of people today. As a pediatrician, I know that achieving a promising future can only be attained through optimal health and wellness. It has therefore been gratifying and an honor to serve as the state's doctor, always feverishly working towards that goal.

I have the utmost confidence in the members of the department of health who have been a true source of knowledge and arduousness during the many unrelenting crises that I have shouldered during my tenure, spanning the spectrum from managing Ebola, Legionella, Zika, Covid-19 and the measles outbreak to tackling e-cigarettes, the opioid epidemic, water quality/safety, maternal mortality, banning fracking and the development of a medical marijuana program, to name just a few.

None of this could be undertaken without the expertise of my departmental colleagues. Whomever shall fill the seat of commissioner will be welcomed by the talent and professionalism of those 5000+ people, knowing firsthand their dedication to public service. I will miss them. Perhaps it would be fitting to say that in this era of social media and distrust in government, the countless unfounded criticisms have been met by conscientiousness and competence, tenacity and audacity.

I very much thank the people of New York State for letting me serve them in this capacity for many years, and undoubtedly during the greatest public health crisis in over a century. It is in my DNA to always ascertain methods to improve the human condition and, unlike this RNA coronavirus, I do not see any mutations forthcoming on that front. Therefore, I look forward to pursuing new opportunities that explore the hurdles and unknowns in medicine, policy and public health and voyage into my own imagination to work on overcoming them.

The never-ending story of New York has always been one of resilience and the chapters to be written will continually be filled with passion, steadfastness and the unwavering pledge to remove injustices and inequities. For that, we are all the better for it and blessed to call ourselves, New Yorkers.

Respectfully,

Howard A. Zucker, MD, JD

Howard Alan Zucker, MD, JD, LLM, FAAP, FACC, FCCM, FAHA, FCLM
Commissioner of Health, New York State