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Subject: Governor Cuomo Commits to Eliminating Hepatitis C in New York State

New York is the first state to make this momentous commitment to eliminate Hepatitis C. With over 200,000 people in New York State living with hepatitis C and infections rising, New York is taking action to put an end to this epidemic.

Albany, NY – Governor Cuomo announced today his commitment to eliminate hepatitis C in New York State and to expand his commitment to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic. New York is leading the way in creating a plan to tackle these epidemics. Community leaders and health care professionals applaud Governor Cuomo for his commitment.

Gloria Searson, Founder and Executive Director of the Coalition on Positive Health Empowerment said, “This is a victory for all those living with hepatitis C in New York State. We’re so excited at COPE to witness the state making a commitment of this proportion. This is certainly the biggest investment any state has made to tackle this epidemic. We are looking forward to working with the governor and the community to end this epidemic. Thank you, Governor Cuomo. This is a great beginning in the elimination of hepatitis C in New York State.”

With over 230,000 people living with hepatitis C across New York State and an effective cure available, there is simply no reason for people to lose their lives to this disease. An estimated 50% are unaware of their status. There are now more deaths related to hepatitis C and liver disease than HIV/AIDS. Over 19,000 deaths were reported in 2015. The opioid epidemic is fueling a rise of new cases of hepatitis C. In 2016, New York State has seen an increase of 14,000 new infections with the highest rates among young people under 30 years old and women of child bearing age. Baby boomers born between 1945 and 1965 continue to have high rates mainly caused by injection drug use and the lack of screening before 1992.

Advocates have been calling on the Governor and the New York State Legislature to provide funding to make elimination possible. With a budget ask of \$10.8 million, the state will be able to fund initiatives in prevention, linkage to care and treatment, funding for incarcerated populations, and surveillance all of which are essential to eliminating hepatitis C in the state. Additionally, legislation proposals to stem the rise of new infections includes expanding syringe exchange programs and decriminalizing possession of syringes, the creation of safe injection facilities, and medication assisted treatment for those who are incarcerated. Although details have not been announced, the Governor’s commitment is a huge step forward towards the realistic goal of eliminating hepatitis C in New York. ###