

On May 11, 2023, there was a resolution on the agenda for the Health and Human Services Committee Meeting titled “FOR THE SULLIVAN COUNTY LEGISLATURE TO ACT AS LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH AND TO ADOPT PUBLIC HEALTH ORDER NO.1-2023.” This document was a yearly routine, ensuring that the Department of Public Health had the authority to offer the county’s numerous summer camps assistance and surveillance with immunizations, and the authority to enforce immunization requirements so that all the kids, staff and public are protected from preventable communicable diseases. The legislature voted unanimously to carry this forward to be approved by the full board on May 18. On that day, the resolution was tabled. When questioned, the Chairman of the Legislature said that the resolution needed a minor rewrite and would be revisited in June. Instead, the resolution disappeared. It could only be tabled for one month without any action.

Once again Sullivan County residents’ health resources are taking the back seat to the Chairman’s political pandering. It’s one thing to have low staffing concerns at our Public Health Department, and another to have the Chairman blocking those who remain from doing their jobs effectively (which is to protect the public’s health in case anybody forgot.) They can’t do the job of protecting the public from the threat of communicable diseases which are brought into the county every year by people who are under immunized, and in the wake of COVID, the immunization rates for children are very, very low. There are numerous regulations and requirements for summer camps, but they’re meaningless if there is no enforcement. It seems incredible that I should have to stand here to remind everyone of the importance of communicable disease surveillance and control measures. Every life here in Sullivan County is important, including the lives and health of all our visitors.

I’ve heard Mrs. Holden speaking several times about her department’s efforts to meet with the Orthodox community to prepare for this summer, and there’s even a report regarding this in this month’s report for the Health and Human Services Committee. Mr. Salamone did his job to pass this resolution through his committee, but he isn’t saying a word about it now. Why can’t you work together to get this done? It’s your job, as legislators, to make sure that the departments have the support they need, and the corruption of the Chairman as evidenced by his blatant disregard of the county’s health and safety is your responsibility.