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# Suffolk Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman Op-Ed: Shared Services Has Unlimited Potential

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**Suffolk County, NY - January 26, 2017** - The Riverhead News-Review published an op-ed by Suffolk Deputy County Executive Jon Kaiman discussing Governor Cuomo's proposals to make shared services panels permanent while exploring options to reduce health care costs for local governments. The text of the op-ed is below.

*Sharing services among local governments is not a new concept. Local governments collaborating with other local governments has been going on for years.*

*During the ten years that I served as North Hempstead Town Supervisor, I not only aggressively pursued the sharing of municipal services in my town of 31 villages and 11 school districts, but found common ground working together with then-Supervisor and now County Executive Steve Bellone.*

*Working together again in response to Governor Cuomo's Shared Service Initiative, Steve Bellone and I along with a talented array of County Executive staff and municipal leaders from across Suffolk County created SuffolkShare – a virtual catalogue of municipal services by local municipalities offered to all participating local governments in Suffolk County.*

*Our Suffolk County team accepted Governor Cuomo's challenge to create significant taxpayer savings by working collaboratively with our sister governments in providing services and procuring goods.*

*I believe that Governor Cuomo understood that the potential to save millions of taxpayer dollars was at our fingertips if local governments would focus on how to expand the current ad hoc approach to sharing services. He put forward a law that required that we make the effort. The results are astounding.*

*Under the leadership of County Executive Steve Bellone, we adopted SuffolkShare -- the most comprehensive shared services plan in the state. According to an independent review by the Rockefeller Institute of Government, the Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz, and the Center for Technology in Government at SUNY Albany, our plan was ranked among the most ambitious in the state, with the highest savings expected to be achieved on an annual basis. Suffolk County and our local partners are projected to save nearly \$37 million over the next two years.*

*The genius of the County-wide Shared Services Initiative is that it empowers local leaders to determine the best course of action for their municipalities. It also inspires us to speak to each other about the greatest challenges we face.*

*One such challenge is, of course, health care. In Suffolk County, health care spending accounts for more than 15 percent of the annual operating budget, and all local governments face the same challenge in managing rising health care costs. In fact, our Suffolk County Shared Services Panel agreed to form a subcommittee to offer suggestions to state legislators regarding ways to reduce burdensome regulations that make this process more difficult. Presently, however, local governments cannot under the law pool our health insurance plans to form larger municipal health care consortiums in order to reduce costs.*

*Thankfully, the Governor has agreed to tackle this issue in his State of the State Address by directing the state Department of Financial Services to make it easier for counties, towns, villages and others to create health consortiums. We must ensure that healthcare costs remain affordable to the taxpayers without compromising our contractual obligations to our employees and their families.*

*This and countless other examples are why the Governor's proposal to make the Shared Services Panels permanent makes sense. By working together on a regular basis, year in and year out, our local municipal governments can achieve so much more while saving taxpayer dollars at every turn.*

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