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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **HOMELESS HOTELS ARE NO VACATION**

*Additional Collaborative Efforts, Resources, and Enhancements Still Required*

Kingston, NY (June 27, 2017) – For the second time in nearly a year, New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli has collaborated with Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach as part of a statewide review of homeless and temporary housing shelters. This year’s report, “Oversight of Hotels and Motels Used for Homeless and Mixed-Use Temporary Residency,” continues the Office of the State Comptroller’s initiative to address significant health and safety issues relating to the conditions of these facilities.

“I applaud State Comptroller DiNapoli’s Office for pointing out the need to improve communication and collaboration among state and local agencies,” Auerbach said. “A cooperative effort between agencies and governments is one way to ensure the safety, cleanliness, and security of temporary hotel and motel residences for the homeless. Local town and village code enforcement officers could be enlisted to support the state agencies charged with oversight of this enormous task.”

Despite a modest showing of improvement in conditions as compared to OSC’s prior audit, the findings left a lot to be desired. Conditions were unsatisfactory or even uninhabitable at 30% of the hotels and motels audited, including but not limited to “mold, water damage, structural damage, exposed wiring, missing smoke detectors, missing linens, and excessive garbage in rooms.” Recommendations to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and the Department of Health focused largely on the need for more guidance to local authorities by way of enhanced uniform procedures and goals for inspections, greater analysis and monitoring of inspection results, and better collaboration among municipal and state offices to “strengthen the current inspection system.”

“Auditors found that unacceptable conditions still exist at some hotel and motel shelters,” DiNapoli said. “In some cases, they found squalid environments that might render facilities uninhabitable. While it is good that the state has made progress in improving facilities, more work is needed to ensure homeless individuals and families are provided safe and secure living arrangements.”

The report can be found at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093017/16s49.pdf>

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*The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller’s Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.*