



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Michigan Local Health Leader Addresses PFAS and Water Protection on Capitol Hill

— *Karla Black, PhD, MEP, PEM, REHS, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Kent County highlighted the role local health departments play in addressing PFAS contamination of wells in Northern Kent County.* —

Washington, DC, October 24, 2019 — In an effort to bring awareness to the work being done at the local level to respond to perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) exposure in drinking water, the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO) joined the National Environmental Health Association, Association of Public Health Laboratories, Trust for America’s Health, and American Public Health Association to hold a Congressional Briefing: *PFAS and Water Protection Briefing with Public Health Experts*. NACCHO is the voice of the nation’s nearly 3,000 local health departments.

Karla Black, Emergency Preparedness Coordinator for Kent County, MI, discussed PFAS contamination of wells in Northern Kent County and the local health department response efforts to understand and mitigate resident exposure. The health department documented more than 700 sites in the county that were contaminated, with levels of PFAS from less than 70 parts per trillion (ppt) to a high of 96,000 ppt. “Each household affected may face health and economic impacts due to PFAS contamination. We still don’t know the full extent of the problem and how long it will take to recover. Our community is counting

on local, state and federal agencies for support and answers about the real danger to their health,” said Black.

PFAS is found in household items, like food packaging materials, nonstick cookware, cleaning products, paints, varnishes, and can contaminate local drinking water. These substances have been linked to numerous health concerns, including high cholesterol, testicular cancer, ulcerative colitis, kidney cancer, and pregnancy-induced hypertension. PFAS exposure can also have certain adverse health effects in growth, learning and behavior of infants and older children.

[According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), the most common sources of exposure to PFAS in the general population are through drinking contaminated water or eating food that contains PFAS. However, if you live near known sources of PFAS contamination, there are steps to limit the amount of exposure. [CDC warns](#), “For the most part, laboratory animals exposed to high doses of one or more of these PFAS have shown changes in liver, thyroid, and pancreatic function, as well as some changes in hormone levels. Because animals and humans process these chemicals differently, more research will help scientists fully understand how PFAS affect human health.”

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About NACCHO

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote health and well-being for all people in their communities. For more information about NACCHO, please visit www.naccho.org.