



National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NACCHO Commends White House Commission Report; Calls for Further Action on Local Prevention Efforts**

**Washington, DC, November 2, 2017** — The [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), representing nearly 3,000 local health departments, thanks the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis for proposing actions that Congress and the Administration can make to address the nation’s opioid epidemic.

The Commission report released yesterday is a good start in highlighting solutions to tackle the opioid epidemic and reduce the human toll of opioid abuse. NACCHO agrees with the Commission about the need for data collection and sharing, including through prescription drug monitoring programs. NACCHO also thanks the Commission for its acknowledgement of the utility of medication-assisted treatment.

NACCHO’s Interim Executive Director and Chief of Government Affairs Laura Hanen, MPP, said, “Local health departments play a critical role in supporting the prevention of prescription and illicit drug overdoses and ensuring appropriate prescribing. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to help ensure prevention and treatment options and resources are available to those affected by the opioid epidemic.”

The report could be strengthened by greater attention to the prevention aspect of the epidemic. Local health departments work with community partners to develop multi-pronged approaches to prevent drug abuse and get people into treatment. Lives are saved every day by first responders and others using naloxone to reverse overdoses. The report does not address the challenges communities face to ensure they have the resources to do the work they know needs to be done. NACCHO calls on the White House and Congress to provide significant resources for prevention, treatment, and recovery that are commensurate with the scope of the problem.

In addition, the report notes the associated infectious diseases related to opioid abuse, but makes no specific recommendations. Cases of hepatitis C are skyrocketing, in part fueled by the opioid epidemic. A comprehensive approach, including access to syringe services programs that provide comprehensive harm reduction services, needs to take into consideration how to reduce infectious disease and other public health issues that are tied to the epidemic.

Along with legislative action and continued federal funding to support local health department efforts, NACCHO favors a four-prong approach to combating the opioid epidemic: (1) improving access to treatment and recovery services; (2) promoting the use of overdose-reversing drugs; (3) strengthening the understanding of the epidemic through better public health surveillance; and (4) advancing better practices for pain management.

“Every day, [91 Americans die of opioid and drug overdoses](#), according to the most recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,” Hanen said. “The opioid epidemic has been driven by multiple factors including poverty and unemployment; lack of access to healthcare; limited availability of treatment facilities; stigma; and prescribing practices. We believe a public health approach is the most effective way to deal with this epidemic afflicting so many of our communities. Local health departments are the boots on the ground that, if given the resources, can bring partners together across the spectrum to find solutions to this multi-faceted and complex crisis.”

To learn more about NACCHO's position on the opioid epidemic, [click here](#).

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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](http://www.naccho.org).