



National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

June 14, 2019

Roula K. Sweis, Psy.D., M.A.

Chief, Operations and Management, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Re: Nomination of Dr. Hillary Kunins for the Interdepartmental Substance Use Disorders Coordinating Committee

Via email: [SUDCommittee@hhs.gov](mailto:SUDCommittee@hhs.gov)

Dear Dr. Sweis:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I write in support of the nomination of Hillary Kunins, MD, MPH, MS, to serve as a member of the Interdepartmental Substance Use Disorder Coordinating Committee. NACCHO is the voice of the nearly 3,000 local health departments across the country. 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.

With nearly 20 years of experience, Dr. Kunins is a proven leader in the public health field who would bring firsthand experience with local community issues surrounding substance abuse prevention and treatment to the Committee. Dr. Kunins is the Executive Deputy Commissioner, Division of Mental Hygiene, for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH). As Executive Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Kunins is responsible for advancing key priorities in children's mental health, criminal justice diversion initiatives for people with serious mental illness, and Medicaid behavioral health care reform. She oversees five bureaus and three offices that include over \$400 million in contracts and programs and more than 500 staff members. Prior to being promoted in June 2019, Dr. Kunins served as New York City's Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Use – Prevention, Care, and Treatment for seven years.

Dr. Kunins has extensive experience treating individuals with substance use disorder (SUD) and has focused on racial and ethnic minority populations over the course of her career. Dr. Kunins' experiences range from direct clinical care provision, clinical research, direction of clinical and prevention services, and assessing and targeting SUD resources to communities in need.

If selected, Dr. Kunins would provide the committee with a critical and valuable local public health perspective. Local health departments are a key partner of the community in which they serve and create the conditions for improved safety and health of their residents. Local officials are not only responsible for ensuring high-quality prevention and access to care in their jurisdictions, but also establishing supportive and comprehensive services that appropriately address the complexities of individuals' lives and improve the health of the entire community. As a nationally recognized speaker, trainer, policy, and SUD expert, Dr. Kunins is uniquely positioned to share advice and information on innovative practices, as well as make recommendations on policies that will affect the health of communities experiencing high rates of SUD.



Dr. Kunins has received many awards including the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Award for New York City's public health/public safety collaboration known as RxSTAT (2019) and the Gary S. Spero Memorial Award for leadership in mental health and substance use treatment from Cornell University (2017). She is currently a Committee Member, Evidence-based Clinical Practice Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Acute Pain, for the National Academy of Medicine (sponsored by U.S. Food and Drug Administration) and an Invited Reviewer, Special Emphasis Panel, for the National Institute of Drug Abuse for NOT-DA-19-022 Addiction Medicine Practice Based Research Network to Address the National Opioid Crisis. Dr. Kunins also Co-Chairs the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse Workgroup that advises the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) on its Clinical Trials Network. She continues to be active in clinical research and is currently the co-investigator on three federally funded research grants, including NIDA's Healing Communities grant to Columbia University (El-Bassel, PI) and a scientific advisor on a NIDA mid-career award (Starrels, PI).

Dr. Kunins extensive experience, knowledge, and leadership in the sphere of SUD and public health position her to provide invaluable input to the Interdepartmental Substance Use Disorders Coordinating Committee. Thank you for your consideration of this nomination. Dr. Kunis is aware of the nomination and looks forward to serving if given the opportunity. If you have any questions, please contact NACCHO Chief of Government and Public Affairs, Adriane Casalotti, MSW, MPH at [acasalotti@naccho.org](mailto:acasalotti@naccho.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Freeman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lori Tremmel Freeman, MBA  
Chief Executive Officer