



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NACCHO Highlights Local Community Needs to Address the Opioid Epidemic

— Local health departments are key partners in this evolving substance misuse crisis —

Washington, DC, January 14, 2020 — The [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), representing the country's nearly 3,000 local health departments sent a letter to Congress to help inform their oversight of the opioid crisis. As noted in NACCHO's report, [Local Health Department Approaches to Opioid Use Prevention and Response: An Environmental Scan](#), local health departments across the country are engaged in a wide range of activities to prevent substance misuse, treat those affected, and save lives. On Tuesday, the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy held a hearing entitled "**A Public Health Emergency: State Efforts to Curb the Opioid Crisis.**"

Here is a portion of NACCHO's letter to the Committee:

Local health departments are key partners in protecting the health and well-being of their communities and are instrumental in slowing and stopping the opioid overdose epidemic and associated harms. Local health departments focus their policy and programming efforts on surveillance; coordination of local substance misuse efforts; establishing linkages to care, providers, and health systems support; developing partnerships with public safety and first responders; and empowering individuals to make safer choices. They are also the "first line of response" in reversing overdose by providing emergency responders with life-saving naloxone, while helping to shape local policy and practice that is evidence-based to reduce harm and save lives.

Policymakers at the federal level have given increased attention to and investment in addressing the opioid crisis. However, more must be done to ensure that federal efforts—especially funding—reach local communities to address these issues. Nearly all local health departments rely on state health departments to pass through adequate federal dollars to ensure the opioid overdose epidemic is addressed block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood. But this funding stream flows better in some states than others. We are hopeful that CDC’s newest round of funding, which includes a requirement that 20% of federal opioid prevention funding sent to the state be passed through to local health departments, will help drive more collaboration across local and state partners, as well as provide a tool to measure and ensure that more local communities have the resources to do their important work.

While we work to ensure that federal resources and policies make it to local communities to address the opioid epidemic, it is important to note that in many places the current opioid overdose epidemic is evolving. We are seeing a rise in poly-substance issue with the rise of methamphetamine overdoses, as well as other substance misuse and abuse that similarly threatens the health and safety of communities. We urge you to ensure that Congress take a comprehensive view of substance abuse as trends change. In addition, future funding should address both the current opioid outbreak and other growing substance misuse problems. Treatment and recovery service dollars should be maintained to promote those already addicted to a substance, but Congress must focus on education and upstream prevention efforts established by local health departments that require additional federal funding.

Please click [here](#) to see the complete letter and citations.

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About NACCHO

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) represents the nation's nearly 3,000 local governmental 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.