



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NACCHO Urges a Comprehensive Public Health Approach with Dedicated Funding to Combat America's Opioid Epidemic

Washington, DC, October 26, 2017 — The [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), representing nearly 3,000 local health departments, acknowledges the White House calling attention to the severity of the opioid epidemic by declaring a public health emergency, and the need to address it in order to save lives. There is an immediate need for a surge in resources, dedicated funding, and a coordinated federal, state, and local response. However, the declaration of an opioid public health emergency and not *a state of national emergency* does not go far enough. A public health emergency lasts 90 days and no additional federal funds will be released. A declaration of a state of national emergency would provide a greater flow of funds to support local health departments' mandates to protect the public health. Local health departments are dependent on increased federal funding to battle a public health crisis that seems to escalate daily.

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. NACCHO urges the Department of Health and Human Services to partner with local agencies to develop solutions to this escalating and deadly crisis. But in addition

to this partnership, more financial support is vital. We strongly urge the Administration to act further and release additional monies to bring this emergency to an end.”

The declaration gives the administration authority to redirect resources from HIV/AIDS programs to help people eligible for those programs to receive substance abuse treatment. While it is critical that people living with HIV and at risk for HIV have access to substance abuse treatment, our response to the opioid epidemic should not come at the expense of other programs. We have made significant progress in addressing the HIV epidemic, and this progress could be hindered if federal funding for HIV/AIDS programs is redirected.

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. “Taxpayers shoulder a financial burden in the millions of dollars. 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 plaguing 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 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.

