



National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NACCHO Supports New Congressional Effort to Address Vaccine Misinformation and Improve Vaccination Rates Across Country**

**Washington, DC, May 21, 2019** — Today, the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), the voice of the nation’s nearly 3,000 local health departments, released the following statement in support of the bipartisan Vaccine Awareness Campaign to Champion Immunization Nationally and Enhance Safety (VACCINES Act). This legislation aims to identify communities at risk for vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks, help educate the public, and combat misinformation about the safety of vaccines.

“Local health departments are on the frontlines of educating their communities about the importance of vaccines, identifying populations at risk for outbreaks, and providing access to these life-saving products. But as we have seen in communities across the country that are battling measles outbreaks, there is more that our nation can and must do to ensure that we all take advantage of the protections that vaccines can bring. The bipartisan VACCINES Act is an important step towards getting these messages to those who need it most,” said NACCHO Chief of Government and Public Affairs Adriane Casalotti, MPH, MSW. “Vaccines save lives and prevent needless suffering. But they also save taxpayer dollars. As we have seen, every case of measles mobilizes an incredibly expensive and time-consuming response, where public health professionals must put everything on hold to focus on preventing and tracking a potential outbreak. Across the country, overburdened

and understaffed health departments are being asked to find millions of dollars they don't have to respond to these outbreaks. We need to do all we can to address vaccine misinformation and make vaccines accessible to individuals across the lifespan. We thank the bill sponsors for taking on this critical issue and for their acknowledgment of the value of local public health departments in these efforts.”

The VACCINES Act would authorize the development and deployment of a national system for surveillance of vaccination rates to target efforts to increase vaccination uptake; research ways to address vaccine hesitancy; and conduct an evidence-based public education campaign on the importance of vaccines, leveraging partnerships with local public health departments and providing grants to better understand the vaccine messaging needs of individual communities.

Local health departments are well situated to participate in VACCINES Act activities. According to [NACCHO Profile data](#) , almost all local health departments provide direct immunization services across the lifespan (90 percent offer adult immunizations and 88 percent offer childhood immunizations), and they have done so consistently over time, regardless of jurisdiction size or degree of jurisdiction urbanization. Additionally, NACCHO's [2017 Assessment of Local Health Department Immunization Programs](#) revealed that local health departments conduct a vast array of immunization activities, such as hosting immunization clinics, conducting education and outreach, collaborating with internal local health department programs, providing immunizations for children and adolescents, and conducting communication campaigns. They play a significant role in communicating with parents about the importance of vaccination and often provide training to healthcare providers on how to communicate the importance of vaccines. They also track data in local communities to assess vaccine coverage, identify areas of need, and ensure protection against vaccine-preventable diseases.

Vaccine confidence is a high priority area for local health departments to address, and vaccine hesitancy or resistance is a significant barrier to achieving high vaccination coverage rates in local communities. However, many local health departments are operating at a diminished capacity due to budget pressures on federal, state, and local governments. In the area of immunization, that means that there are fewer epidemiologists to track the spread of diseases and identify underserved areas within the community with

lower vaccination coverage rates. There are also fewer nurses to staff immunization clinics, provide vaccines, and conduct outreach within communities.

More information can be found in NACCHO's policy statements on vaccines: [Immunization Programs](#), [Vaccine Safety](#), [Immunization Information Systems](#), [Vaccine Supply and Distribution](#), [School and Child Care Immunization Requirements](#), [Influenza Vaccination for Health Care Personnel](#), and [Access to School-Based Data](#).

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