

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

February 27, 2018

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services, Education,
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran, Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Leahy, and Ranking Member Murray:

On behalf of nearly 3,000 local health departments, the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) calls on Congress to move swiftly to address the ongoing public health emergency of the opioid epidemic. We were pleased to see \$6 billion for opioids included in the recent Bipartisan Budget Act. As you consider the appropriation of additional funding aimed at combatting the nation's opioid epidemic, we ask you to support a comprehensive response by providing **\$500 million in FY2018 and the same or greater amount in FY2019 in additional funding** to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for opioid overdose prevention efforts.

These funds would allow the CDC and state, local, territorial, and tribal health departments to do the following activities:

- Improve Monitoring and Surveillance of Opioid Use and Misuse
- Expand and Strengthen Evidence-Based Prevention and Education Strategies to Slow the Epidemic
- Manage Appropriate Access to Opioids

The 21st Century Cures Act and Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act provided a down payment of \$500 million in FY2017 and FY2018 for opioid treatment and prevention efforts, however, none of the funds were appropriated to the CDC, our nation's lead federal agency for public health and prevention efforts. With the new investment of \$6 billion to fight the opioid epidemic in FY2018, we would appreciate recognition of the important role of the CDC and their support for state and local efforts to address the opioid epidemic. Furthermore, Congress must ensure that funding reaches the front lines of the opioid epidemic happening at the local level. This is currently not the case for local health departments.



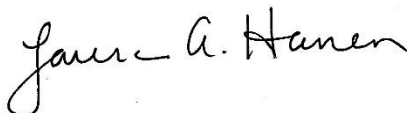
The opioid epidemic has been driven by multiple factors including poverty and unemployment; lack of access to healthcare; limited availability of treatment facilities (e.g., mental and behavioral health) and modalities (e.g., medication assisted therapy); stigma; and prescribing practices. The loss of life and economic burden must be addressed by using evidence-based approaches that expand access and utilization of both treatment and prevention strategies. Up to this point, local communities that are hardest hit have received little in the way of federal funding to help prevent the epidemic from taking a greater toll.

The CDC uses data and prevention strategies that help to better target the factors that lead to opioid overdose deaths such as improving access to data, strengthening intervention efforts, and equipping health care providers with data and tools needed for appropriate opioid prescribing. To stem the tide of the epidemic, Congress should provide resources into programs that address opioid overdose treatment and prevention efforts. A greater investment in the CDC would result in a scale up of programmatic prevention initiatives across all 50 states and Washington, D.C. CDC's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program would be able to inform action using data that would curb opioid prescription abuses. Most importantly, an additional investment in CDC Opioid Abuse and Overdose Prevention programs would strengthen prevention strategies at the local level, targeting specific populations of particular need, including rural and tribal communities.

In addition to concerns about opioid overdose, there are additional risks for poor health outcomes and blood-borne infections, including HIV, hepatitis C virus (HCV), and hepatitis B virus (HBV) among injection drug users. Substantial progress has been made in reducing HIV infections among injection drug users, but increases in injection drug use stemming from the opioid epidemic present a new set of challenges, particularly in rural and suburban communities. CDC must have an investment in funding to tackle these emerging threats using surveillance capabilities. Enhancing surveillance in high risk communities will better track trends in opioid misuse and enhance the capacity for rapid outbreak response. These areas often lack the public health and healthcare infrastructure and services to comprehensively address the epidemic, leaving communities vulnerable to infectious disease outbreaks.

With an additional investment in CDC by Congress to combat the opioid epidemic, we are hopeful that a comprehensive federal response will be strengthened to better respond and prevent opioid misuse and overdose. As you consider appropriating new investments, we urge that you recognize the need to provide support for both opioid overdose treatment and prevention efforts. Please contact Eli Briggs, NACCHO Senior Director of Government Affairs at ebriggs@naccho.org should you have any questions or wish to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Laura A. Hanen, MPP
Interim Executive Director
& Chief of Government Affairs



William Barnes, PhD, MBA
Interim Executive Director
& Chief Program Officer