



National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

For Immediate Release

Contact

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NACCHO Leader to Testify Before Congress on Biological Terrorism

Washington, DC, October 16, 2019 — Dr. Umair Shah, Executive Director of [Harris County Public Health](#), will testify October 17th at 10:00 a.m. before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery of the House Committee on Homeland Security in a hearing entitled, “Defending the Homeland from Bioterrorism: Are We Prepared?” in addition to leading Harris County Public Health, the nation’s third most populous county with 4.7 million people including Houston, Dr. Shah is Past-President of the [National Association of County and City Health Officials](#) (NACCHO), the voice of the nation’s nearly 3,000 local health departments. In his upcoming testimony, Dr. Shah will discuss the role of local health departments as it relates to biological terrorism and preparedness.

In his testimony, Dr. Shah will discuss the importance of local response to emergencies, stating “Public health emergency preparedness is truly national health security. Local health departments play an essential role in ensuring that people and their communities are prepared for, protected from, and are resilient to, threats to health that result from a host of disasters and emergencies. Given that the impact of all disasters is felt locally first and foremost, local health departments have and will continue to play a critical part of every community’s first response to disasters in an emergency and in the long-term recovery efforts.”

Local health departments play a key role in achieving national health security by preparing their communities for disasters, responding when emergencies occur, and lending support through the recovery process. They are the “boots on the ground” in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from public health emergencies such as disease outbreaks, natural and human-caused disasters, and terrorist attacks. They also play a key role in convening partners through healthcare coalitions and other mechanisms to ensure that public health, health care, first responders, and others in the community are coordinated and know what to do before disaster strikes. More on trends for local public health departments can be found in [NACCHO's 2018 Preparedness Profile](#).

A link to Dr. Shah's full written testimony can be found [here](#) and additional information about the hearing can be found [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 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.