



Lexington-Fayette County Health Department

650 Newtown Pike
Lexington, KY 40508-1197
(859) 252-2371
(859) 288-2359 Fax
(859) 288-2455 Public Health Clinic Fax

April 9, 2021

Congressman Andy Barr

2430 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515
Re: FY22 Appropriations Community Project Funding Interest
City of Lexington, KY
Barrier Free Re-Entry and Recovery Engagement (BFREE) Project

Dear Congressman Barr:

The Lexington-Fayette County Health Department, an independent local public health agency responsible for public health in Lexington-Fayette County, Kentucky, is very pleased to recommend the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government's grant application for an award from FY22 Appropriations Community Project Funding. Funding for the proposed initiatives, known as the Barrier Free Re-Entry and Recovery Engagement (BFREE) Project, will support Lexington's coordinated, comprehensive response to the opioid crisis affecting our community and our region.

Local government and community agencies in Lexington recognize the heavy toll that drug addiction and substance use disorders are taking on our hometown's collective health. Data show that overdose deaths in Lexington nearly doubled between 2010 and 2014. At the same time, the rate of deaths from overdoses associated with heroin rose dramatically, far outpacing rates in other parts of the state and nation. The latest data indicate that overdose deaths among Lexington residents are again increasing after a brief plateau, probably due challenges in maintaining sobriety during a pandemic, including less opportunity for recovery supports in the community.

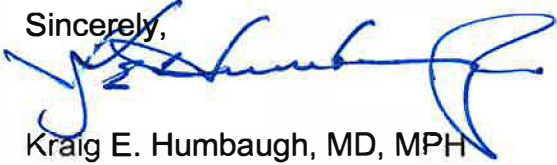
The Lexington-Fayette County Health Department operates separately from urban county government, but has close working relationships with urban county government agencies, such as the Department of Social Services and the Department of Public Safety, as well as mental health treatment and recovery providers in the community. Collectively, we each hold a piece of the solution to reducing the negative health effects of the opioid crisis and helping people access treatment and continue into long-term recovery. The health department's focus has been and continues to be on providing harm reduction services for people who are currently injecting drugs, the majority of which are opioids. The department's needle exchange program serves as a hub for multiple harm reduction services, including naloxone distribution and testing for HIV and hepatitis C, performed by staff of the health department and other community agencies.

Urban county government's application for funding is designed to provide much needed support for the transition from treatment to recovery, so that gains made by persons in treatment can be sustained. Resources for this transitional re-entry phase are critical if long-term recovery is to be successful. We are especially grateful for Lexington's community paramedicine program, which has been able to effectively reach those who are at-risk and connect them with wrap-around services. This funding would further support their efforts and others who strive to keep people in recovery.

We strongly support this project and pledge continued partnerships with urban county government agencies, social services and mental health agencies. Our hope is to continue to integrate the services that we provide at the health department with other community initiatives, such as these, for this high-risk population. We are all striving to do our part, with the ultimate goal of reducing deaths and improving health.

I urge you to give full consideration to Lexington's application for funding.

Sincerely,



Kraig E. Humbaugh, MD, MPH
Commissioner of Health
Lexington-Fayette County Health Department