



### **The Opioid in the Black Community Congressional Briefing**

On Wednesday, April 11, Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke (NY-09) hosted a briefing entitled “The Opioid in the Black Community Congressional Briefing.” It was held in conjunction with the National Medical Association, National Black Nurses Association, and National Dental Association. Congresswoman Clarke started the discussion by distinguishing the two different forms of opioid epidemic spreading across the United States today: prescription drug abuse among the suburban white American population and the use of illicit opioids among the minority population. She then highlighted the different approaches to each: one is looked at as a public health problem while the other is criminalized to deal with essentially the same problem, respectively. The panelist talked about the lack of focus on the social determinants related to the crisis and its connection to relapse issues. They also talked about the discrepancy in resources specifically related to lower medication assisted treatment capacity in the urban areas. One of the panelist, Dr. Edwards, proposed medication assisted treatment used with better social services as an effective method to treat opioid addiction. She also suggested that the inclusion of one’s place of worship, barbershops, salons, and other important places in the black community as effective spaces for outreach. The panelists urged law makers to address these key issues related to structural inequity that creates a gap in resource distribution throughout minority communities.