

May 13, 2016

Dear Senator,

The undersigned organizations committed to the health and wellbeing of our nation's families and communities urge you in the strongest terms to support the greatest possible level of emergency supplemental funding to prepare for and respond to the Zika virus during consideration of Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bills, and to oppose efforts to use other important public health funding as an offset.

As you know, the Zika virus has been determined to cause microcephaly, a serious birth defect of the brain, in many babies of mothers who contracted the virus while pregnant. Thousands of devastating birth defects have been observed among infants born in South and Central America in recent months. As of this writing, Zika has already been diagnosed in almost 500 travelers returning to the U.S. from these areas, including close to 50 pregnant women. As the summer months approach and we enter mosquito season, millions of Americans will be exposed to the mosquitos that can spread this virus. Over four million babies are born in our nation each year, and many of their mothers could be at risk for contracting Zika during pregnancy.

Emergency supplemental funding is badly needed to respond to the Zika virus. With this funding, federal, state and local public health professionals will be able to pursue virus readiness and response, enhanced laboratory, epidemiology and surveillance capacity in at-risk areas, and surge capacity through rapid response teams to limit potential clusters of Zika virus. Moreover, supplemental funding will assist the CDC and USAID in efforts to contain the Zika virus in Zika-endemic countries and ensure that there are resources for surveillance, vector control and services for affected pregnant women and children.

If we take immediate action, we may be able to dramatically slow the spread of Zika, giving scientists time to develop and test a vaccine. Without action, however, we fear the number of newborns born with debilitating birth defects will only continue to rise. In addition to the human toll on children and families, the CDC estimates that the average lifetime cost of caring for each child born with microcephaly will likely be millions of dollars *per child*. For hard-hit communities, an epidemic of severe birth defects could quickly overwhelm health care and social services systems, and put extreme pressure on educational and other institutions.

Our nation cannot afford to wait to act until infants and families have already been impacted by Zika virus and its terrible consequences. We urge you to support language to provide the greatest possible amount of emergency resources necessary to protect pregnant women, infants and children from this devastating infection.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Family Physicians  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association for Clinical Chemistry

American College of Nurse Midwives  
American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American College of Preventive Medicine  
American Medical Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Clinical Pathology  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene  
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Children's Hospital Association  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Coalition for Health Funding  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.  
Cooley's Anemia Foundation  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Easterseals  
Every Child By Two  
First Candle  
First Focus  
Genetic Alliance  
Healthcare Ready  
HIV Medicine Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
March of Dimes  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Birth Defects Prevention Network  
National Coalition of STD Directors  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Indian Health Board  
National Medical Association  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
National Organization of County and City Health Officials  
National Recreation and Park Association  
OraSure Technologies, Inc.  
Public Health Institute

Research!America

Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

Society for Maternal-Society Medicine

Society for Public Health Education

The Arc

Trisomy 18 Foundation

Trust for America's Health