

June 14, 2016

Dear Conferee,

The undersigned organizations committed to the health and wellbeing of our nation's children and families urge you move quickly to provide the highest possible level of funding to fight the Zika virus. We also urge Congress to provide new funding rather than repurpose funds from other high priority public health programs. Unless Congress acts immediately, we risk squandering our nation's opportunity to prevent the Zika virus from gaining a foothold in the United States this summer.

In recent weeks, scientists have confirmed that Zika is the cause of the devastating cases of birth defects seen in South America, parts of Central America, and the Caribbean. As of this writing, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is tracking 206 cases of pregnant women infected with Zika in the continental United States and 166 cases in Puerto Rico and other territories. Research is rapidly uncovering the ways Zika evades the mother's immune system, invades the placenta, and wreaks havoc upon the fetal brain. Our nation has never before faced a situation where a single mosquito bite could result in dreadful, permanent, life-altering birth defects.

In light of these facts, it is of paramount importance that Congress act immediately to appropriate adequate emergency supplemental funding. With robust funding, state, local and tribal public health professionals would have access to increased virus readiness and response capacity focused on areas with ongoing Zika transmission; enhanced laboratory, epidemiology and surveillance capacity in at-risk areas to reduce the opportunities for Zika transmission; and surge capacity through rapid response teams to limit potential Zika clusters in the United States. Moreover, this funding will assist the CDC and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in efforts to contain the Zika virus in affected countries and ensure that there are resources for surveillance, vector control and services for affected pregnant women and children.

Congress' failure to act to date may already mean that funding will be unable to reach states, localities and tribes until late summer or fall, wasting valuable weeks and months when aggressive preventive action is crucial. The costs of delay may well be seen in terms of both human suffering and economic burden to government health programs. Given that each infant with microcephaly is expected to require \$10 million in care over a lifetime, just 100 babies with microcephaly – a tiny fraction of all annual births in the United States – would total \$1 billion in costs.

Our nation does not have a moment to lose. Even now, it will require an extraordinary effort to move emergency funds into the field to make a meaningful difference in Zika prevention this summer. We urge you to immediately develop and pass a conference report at the highest level of funding possible.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO

AFSCME

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Physicians

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Public Health Association

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

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
Children's Environmental Health Network
Cooley's Anemia Foundation
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Easter Seals
Every Child by Two
Healthcare Ready
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Disease Society of America
March of Dimes
National Association of County and City Health Officials
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 Organization for Rare Disorders
OraSure Technologies, Inc.
Public Health Institute
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Trust for America's Health