

February 23, 2016

Chairman Thad Cochran
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-128 Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski
Senate Appropriations Committee
S-146A Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Hal Rogers
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Nita Lowey
House Appropriations Committee
1015 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in support of the President's request for \$1.9 billion in emergency funding to prepare for and respond to the Zika virus. We believe that emerging infectious disease threats like Zika require ongoing vigilance, but the particular risks from this virus require immediate, additional investments. We also urge Congress to allocate new money for the response, rather than repurposing funds that are designated for Ebola response and global health security.

Although not a new virus, 2015 marked the first widespread transmission of the Zika virus in the Americas. The virus is spread primarily by mosquitoes and usually causes only mild illness or no symptoms, but it may be causing a steep increase in birth defects in infants born to mothers who were infected during pregnancy.¹ In January 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant to avoid travel to regions and countries with widespread Zika transmission or to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes there.² The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently declared a public health emergency of international concern due to the spike in microcephaly (babies born with abnormally small heads) and Guillain-Barré syndrome in the Americas.

In a recent report, *Outbreaks: Protecting Americans from Infectious Diseases*, Trust for America's Health found that the Ebola outbreak demonstrated how quickly a new threat can arise – and how complacency and lapses in sustained support and funding for preparedness can leave countries and communities unnecessarily vulnerable.³ We are especially concerned with how little is understood about Zika, including how microcephaly may be connected, how transmission and birth defects can be prevented, and any mitigation or treatment of these outcomes. U.S.

¹ CDC, *Zika*. <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

² CDC Travel Notice, *Zika Virus in the Americas*. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/zika-virus-south-america>

³ Trust for America's Health, *Outbreaks: Protecting Americans from Infectious Diseases*, 2015. <http://healthyamericans.org/reports/outbreaks2015/>

assistance is needed because, like Ebola, Zika is spreading in some nations with limited public health and healthcare infrastructure. Residents in U.S. states and territories may also be at risk from imported cases or transmission in areas with the *Aedes* species mosquitoes -- the species that spreads Zika virus to humans.

We support the allocation of funds delineated in the President's request. Funding for CDC is especially needed to build response and prevention in the United States and territories as well as international surveillance and public health capacity. The request includes enhanced international capacity for surveillance, expanding the Field Epidemiology Training Program, laboratory testing, healthcare provider training, and surveillance and control in countries at highest risk for an outbreak. The supplemental will also accelerate research and development of medical countermeasures, including vaccines and diagnostics, which will be a critical piece in combating the virus.

During times of crisis, the world looks to the United States to take the lead. While the extent of this outbreak remains to be seen, we cannot wait before taking action. We urge you act quickly to fund the full emergency supplemental for Zika preparedness and response.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine
American Nurses Association
American Pharmacists Association
American Public Health Association
American Sexual Health Association
American Society for Microbiology
American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
AmeriCares
Assembly of Petworth
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
California Life Sciences Association – CLSA
Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy
Child Care Aware® of America
Coalition for Health Funding
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Entomological Society of America
Every Child By Two – Carter/Bumpers Champions for Immunization

Healthcare Ready
Healthy Kinder Inc.
Infectious Diseases Society of America
International Safety Equipment Association
Madison Medical Center
March of Dimes
Nanotherapeutics, Inc.
Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Environmental Health Association
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National Recreation and Park Association
Northwest Healthcare Response Network
NYS Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO)
NYU College of Global Public Health
Oklahoma City-County Health Department
Public Health Foundation
Public Health Institute
Romark, L.C.
Society for Public Health Education
Soligenix, Inc.
STC
Suffolk County Bureau of Public Health Nursing
Trust for America's Health
UPMC Center for Health Security