

June 14, 2016

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Zika Conference Committee Leaders:

As you begin to conference Zika-response legislation, the undersigned medical associations urge you in the strongest possible terms to quickly reconcile the House and Senate Zika bills and also provide the highest possible funding level for research, prevention, control, and treatment of illnesses associated with the Zika virus that is commensurate with the public health emergency that the virus represents.

The Zika virus has the potential to rapidly become a public-health emergency that poses a grave risk to Americans, especially to pregnant women and their fetuses who may be at risk of severe birth defects, and more broadly, to women of child-bearing age who may become pregnant. There is simply no time to waste—while travel-related, earlier this month the first baby in the continental U.S. with Zika virus-related microcephaly was born. Illness brought on by the Zika virus is rising rapidly by the exposure of travelers returning to the mainland U.S., confirmed Zika virus cases in the U.S. territories exceed 1,300, and the country has already entered the summer season when mosquitos that carry and transmit the virus will be proliferating.

While we were encouraged that each chamber of Congress passed its own legislation to address the Zika issue and that a conference committee was convened, those efforts have still yet to yield an agreement that would deliver the emergency funding and resources necessary to fully and robustly respond to the Zika virus. It's imperative that the conference committee reach an agreement on a conference report without further delay; every day that goes by without an agreement is a day where more patients will be at risk of being exposed to the virus. We also request that the conference committee exercise caution so that funding for other essential health initiatives is not used to offset a Zika response effort.

We urge, therefore, that you and all members of the conference committee—without any delay—work to complete a conference report that can be brought to the House and Senate for approval that would provide the highest funding level possible that is commensurate with the seriousness of this public health threat caused by the Zika virus. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wanda Filer, MD, MBA, FAAFP
President

American Academy of Family Physicians



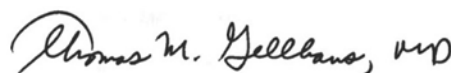
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CC: Zika Conference Committee Members