

September 6, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader Reid,

On behalf of the millions of Americans we represent, we urge Congress in the strongest possible terms to craft a Zika funding package that can be passed with broad support and signed by the President immediately.

As of September 1, 49 locally-transmitted cases of Zika have been identified in Florida, and experts predict others will occur in Texas and in Louisiana, a situation exacerbated by recent flooding. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that 624 pregnant women in U.S. states and an additional 971 in the territories have been infected with Zika. Overall, there are now over 16,000 cases of Zika in the U.S. and territories. Given that Zika infection is often asymptomatic, the reported number of cases is likely an undercount of the actual number of cases. Seventeen babies in the U.S. have been born with microcephaly and, tragically, one of those infants has died. The Administration has declared a public health emergency in Puerto Rico, where experts predict that 25 percent of the island will become infected with the virus by the end of 2016, including thousands of pregnant women. The CDC has issued the first-ever domestic travel advisory, warning pregnant women not to travel to areas of Florida where local transmission of Zika is occurring.

We are continually learning more disturbing news about Zika, which appears to pose an even greater danger than previously thought. While the link between Zika and microcephaly is well documented, the virus may cause less visible, yet still serious problems for infants, some of which may not become apparent for years after birth. While pregnant women and infants are particularly vulnerable to Zika, research is now linking Zika to health consequences in adults, such as Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

As the virus gains a foothold in the mainland U.S., Americans have grown increasingly disillusioned with Congress' failure to act. Six months have elapsed since the Administration's request for emergency funds to combat Zika, time that could have been spent better preparing for and preventing the virus. The opportunity for total prevention has been squandered; Congress must act now to contain Zika and prevent it from spreading to other communities. Immediate funding is essential to help communities protect their residents from Zika, enable them to prepare for the future, and ensure that development of vaccines, diagnostics and treatments proceeds as rapidly as possible.

Congress has already delayed too long. All sides must return to the negotiating table immediately to craft a package that can be passed by both chambers and signed by the President. Anything else further endangers the health and wellbeing of American women, infants, and families.

Sincerely,

AABB

African American Health Alliance

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus

American Association of Birth Centers

American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy

American Association on Health and Disability

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Physicians

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)

American Public Health Association

American Society for Clinical Pathology

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs

Association of Public Health Laboratories

Association of Reproductive Health Professionals

Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health

Association of State and Territorial Health Officials

Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Big Cities Health Coalition

Children's Environmental Health Network

Coalition for Health Funding

Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)

Cooley's Anemia Foundation

Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists

Easterseals

Family Voices

GBS|CIDP Foundation International

Genetic Alliance

Healthcare Ready

HIV Medicine Association

Infectious Diseases Society of America

March of Dimes

National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC)

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
Newborn Foundation
OraSure Technologies
Public Health Institute
Racial and Ethnic Disparities Coalition
Research!America
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Save the Children
Sierra Club
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
The Arc
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Trust for America's Health