

April 5, 2016

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

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
Washington, DC 20515

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

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

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi, Chairman Upton and Representative Pallone, and Chairman Rogers and Representative Lowey,

The undersigned organizations committed to the health and wellbeing of our nation's families and communities urge you in the strongest terms to immediately provide emergency supplemental funding to prepare for and respond to the Zika virus here in the United States. We also urge that Congress provide new funding rather than repurpose money from other high priority programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal agencies that ensure our health security and public health preparedness.

As you know, the Zika virus has been linked to microcephaly, a serious birth defect of the brain, in 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. Zika has already been diagnosed in travelers returning to the U.S. from these areas. As the summer months approach and we enter mosquito season, our nation can expect to be exposed to 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.

With emergency supplemental funding to respond to the Zika virus, state and local 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 clusters of Zika virus in the United States. 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.

The President has requested emergency funding to educate Americans about protecting themselves, reduce the mosquito population, and accelerate Zika vaccine research. Each of these steps is vital to reducing the likelihood that pregnant women will be exposed to the Zika virus.

Our nation has a brief window of opportunity to slow the spread of the Zika virus and avert a wave of preventable birth defects. We urge you to act immediately to provide the emergency resources necessary to protect pregnant women, infants and children from this devastating infection.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association

American Academy of Family Physicians

American Academy of Pediatrics

American Association for Clinical Chemistry

American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus

American College of Nurse-Midwives

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

American Medical Association

American Nurses Association

American Pediatric Society

American Public Health Association

American Sexual Health Association

American Society for Clinical Pathology

American Society for Reproductive Medicine

Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology

Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs

Association of Medical School Pediatric Department Chairs

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 Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
Children's Environmental Health Network
Children's Hospital Association
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Cooley's Anemia Foundation
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists
Easter Seals
Every Child By Two
First Candle
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Healthcare Ready
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
Intrexon
Johnson & Johnson
March of Dimes
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Birth Defects Prevention Network
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Council of La Raza
National Environmental Health Association
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Medical Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
National Organization for Rare Disorders
National Partnership for Women & Families

National Recreation and Park Association

Novavax, Inc.

Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health

OraSure Technologies, Inc.

Oregon Public Health Association

Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society

Pediatric Policy Council

Public Health Institute

Research!America

Resolve: The National Infertility Association

Save Babies Through Screening Foundation

Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America

Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine

Society for Pediatric Research

Society for Women's Health Research

The Arc

The Newborn Foundation

Trisomy 18 Foundation

Trust for America's Health