



May 5, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
The Capitol S-230
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
The Capitol H-232
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
The Capitol S-221
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol H-204
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators McConnell & Reid and Representatives Ryan & Pelosi:

On behalf of state maternal and child health leaders, the Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) urges immediate bipartisan action on a funding package to support preparedness for the Zika virus.

Mosquito season is starting, and at least 27 states fall within the estimated range of the type of mosquito that can carry the virus, which has a proven link to devastating birth defects. As of today, 426 cases of travel-associated Zika virus infections have been reported within the U.S., including 36 pregnant women. U.S. territories report 596 cases of locally acquired infections, including 56 among pregnant women.

With adequate resources, state and territorial maternal and child health programs can play a crucial role in supporting state Zika preparedness efforts, including expanding identification and follow-up for women, children, and families impacted by Zika; utilizing existing channels to provide outreach and prevention education to women of reproductive age and to their health care providers; providing MCH expertise to state emergency operations centers; and preparing State Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Programs and partners to adapt specific outreach, support and care coordination services to potentially affected families.

We are grateful that elected officials are recognizing these needs, and we ask that Congress approve emergency funding without delay. Together, we must move quickly to do all we can to protect families from this threat. While we prepare to combat Zika, we must not lose sight of other emerging and ongoing public health challenges. Emergency funding should not take money from efforts to address other urgent health care needs including the approximately 24,000 babies who die each year before their first birthday, and the five-fold increase in babies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome connected to

the opioid crisis. In addition to supplemental funds to address Zika, ongoing support is needed for a strong, flexible public health system at the federal, state and local levels to address these challenges.

Mosquito season is upon us. There is a clear and present danger to babies and families. There is no time to delay. We ask in the strongest terms possible that Congress move immediately to pass an emergency funding package to fund preparedness to address the Zika virus, and have a bill on the president's desk before you recess for Memorial Day. If you have any questions or we can be of further assistance please contact Brent Ewig (bewig@amchp.org or 202-266-3041) on my staff.

Sincerely,

/s/

Lori Tremmel Freeman
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Members of Congress