

May 18, 2016

Dear Representative,

The undersigned organizations committed to the health and wellbeing of our nation's children and families urge you to provide emergency supplemental funding to combat Zika virus at or near the President's requested levels, and to reject proposals that fall far short of those amounts, particularly those that would fund efforts against Zika by cutting other vital public health programs and priorities.

As you know, the Zika virus is responsible for causing thousands of severe birth defects in South America over the past year. It also appears likely that Zika is causing miscarriages and less severe birth defects to an as-yet-unknown extent. Zika has spread northward steadily and is now reported to affect almost 50 nations in the Americas. Already, all but five states in the U.S. have reported travel-associated Zika cases, and as many as 30 states fall within the range of the mosquito known to carry this virus. As summer begins, it is possible that Zika virus could gain a foothold in portions of the United States, particularly along our Gulf Coast.

Robust federal, state, tribal and territorial public health responses are critical to our ability to respond to Zika and prevent the terrible birth defects it causes. The President has requested emergency funding to engage in a full range of public health efforts to prevent transmission and educate the American people about how to protect themselves and their loved ones, as well as to assist Zika-endemic nations in stemming the virus. The package represents an appropriately full-fledged response to a potential public health crisis that could have dire consequences for infants and families.

In contrast, we are profoundly disappointed in the inadequate funding levels proposed in H.R. 5243, the Zika Response Appropriations Act. This initiative fails to provide appropriate resources to address any of the needed public health efforts to protect pregnant women and their infants from Zika virus. The bill provides less than one-third of its funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for the public health efforts desperately needed this summer, such as laboratory capacity, vector control, and public education. It also appears to restrict funding for the National Institutes of Health only to engaging in vaccine development, which would prevent its use for time-critical needs like cohort studies to determine risk of and susceptibility to birth defects caused by Zika. The fact that this funding is only available until the end of September places unwarranted and counterproductive constraints on its use.

Underfunding Zika prevention efforts will come with a heavy human and economic toll. In addition to experiencing the pain of families with infants born with dreadful preventable birth defects, our nation can expect costs of approximately \$10 million in lifetime costs of care for *each* affected baby. Most of those costs are likely to be borne by the government through Medicaid programs.

Our nation has no time to waste. Even now, it will require an extraordinary effort to move emergency funds into the field to make a meaningful difference in Zika prevention this summer. We urge you to support full funding for Zika prevention and to reject half-measures.

Sincerely,

Academic Pediatric Association
ADAP Advocacy Association
African American Health Alliance
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Pediatric Society
American Public Health Association
American Sexual Health Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society of Hematology
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of American Medical Colleges
Association of Maternal and 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 University Centers on Disabilities
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses
Avery's Angels Gastroschisis Foundation
Coalition for Health Funding
Community Access National Network
Cooley's Anemia Foundation
Easterseals
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Endocrine Society
First Candle
GBS|CIDP Foundation International
Healthcare Ready
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
March of Dimes
National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors
National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Birth Defects Prevention Network
National Center for Healthy Housing
National Coalition of STD Directors
National Environmental Health Association
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Indian Health Board
National Organization for Rare Disorders
Oregon Public Health Association
Pediatric Policy Council
Public Health Institute
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Society for Pediatric Research
Spina Bifida Association
The Arc
Trisomy 18 Foundation
Trust for America's Health