

July 13, 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,

Time has run out. We implore Congress to send a bipartisan Zika emergency spending bill to the President by the end of this week to combat the terrible threat this virus poses to pregnant women and their babies.

As of this writing, over 3,600 Americans have been diagnosed with Zika virus – over 2,500 in the territories, and more than 1,100 in the states. Most alarmingly, 320 pregnant women in the states and another 279 in the territories have been diagnosed with Zika and are being followed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's possible that as many or more people are infected and unaware of their status, since 80% of Zika cases cause no symptoms. If only 10% of Zika infections among pregnant women cause some degree of brain damage – and estimates are that microcephaly alone could occur in up to 13% of cases, not to mention other birth defects -- this translates to *over 50 infants who will be impacted just among the currently known cases*. In addition to the human suffering involved, these cases could easily translate to hundreds of millions of dollars in health care costs over these children's lifetimes.

Resources are desperately needed to launch prevention efforts and prepare to respond to any local transmission of Zika. States, localities, and tribes do not have sufficient staff or supplies to engage in vector control or public education. Researchers are working furiously on possible vaccines, but funding is running short. Biotechnology researchers will be forced to abandon Zika projects if the U.S. government cannot demonstrate a commitment to funding research and development. Nonprofit organizations are doing everything they can, but it is not enough. Only the federal government has the resources to step in and fund these efforts adequately.

On behalf of pregnant women and their families across this nation, we beseech Members of Congress to come together and find a solution to ensure that Zika does not gain a foothold here in the U.S. No pregnant woman should have to worry that a single mosquito bite will change her baby's life forever. We stand ready to assist you in finding a path to sending a bipartisan Zika emergency spending bill to the President for signature before it's too late.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO
African American Health Coalition
AFSCME
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy
American Association on Health and Disability
American College of Nurse-Midwives
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Federation of Teachers
American Public Health Association
American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology
Association of Flight Attendants - CWA
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of Public Health Laboratories
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
Children's Environmental Health Network
Coalition for Health Funding
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Cooley's Anemia Foundation
Easterseals
Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
Genetic Alliance
HIV Medicine Association
Infectious Diseases Society of America
March of Dimes
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 Network of Public Health Institutes
National Organization for Rare Diseases
OraSure
Planned Parenthood Federation of America

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
The Arc
Trust for America's Health
United Steelworkers