

August 3, 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 compromise Zika funding package that can pass both chambers and be signed by the President, and to be ready to act immediately on it upon Congress' return in September.

Zika virus presents a serious, imminent threat to pregnant women and infants across our nation. Recent studies have revealed that Zika is an even greater danger than we suspected. The virus can be transmitted not only by a simple mosquito bite, but also through sexual contact by either men or women. Zika may remain in bodily fluids for months; a recent study showed Zika persisting in semen for over 90 days. And while microcephaly is an obvious and severe outcome of Zika infection during pregnancy, we are just beginning to explore the spectrum of less visible but serious health consequences for infants, such as damage to the brain, vision, and hearing.

Fifteen cases of locally-transmitted cases of Zika have been identified in Florida. Over a dozen infants have been born in the U.S. with microcephaly. More than four hundred pregnant women in the states and over 400 more in the territories have been diagnosed with Zika and are being followed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It's possible that many people are infected and unaware of their status, since 80% of Zika cases cause no symptoms. The CDC has now recommended that every pregnant woman be assessed for Zika infection at every prenatal visit.

Congress must not allow Zika to spread unchecked. Our nation faces billions of dollars in medical costs just from screening pregnant women for Zika infection and its consequences. It is imperative that all parties return to the negotiating table immediately to craft a Zika funding package that can be passed by the House and Senate and signed into law by the President.

It may already be too late to stop Zika from gaining a foothold in some parts of the U.S., but we still have time to prevent more widespread transmission. Our nation expects Congress to come to a bipartisan compromise and be ready to act on it immediately in September. Anything less would represent a historic failure to protect our nation from a significant threat to the health of our children.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO  
African American Health Alliance  
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 Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Network of Community Options and Resources  
American Public Health Association  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges  
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  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Big Cities Health Coalition  
Coalition for Health Funding  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.  
Cooley's Anemia Foundation  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Easterseals  
Every Child by Two  
Family Voices  
GBS|CIDP Foundation International  
Genetic Alliance  
HIV Medicine Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
National Association of Community Health Centers  
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  
Newborn Foundation  
OraSure Technologies  
Public Health Institute  
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition  
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
The Arc  
Trust for America's Health