

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

September 15, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I urge you to provide emergency funding to address the Zika virus threat at the highest possible funding level for an entire 12 months, without partisan riders. I also urge Congress to explicitly specify that FY2016 funds repurposed for Zika from the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) be restored. NACCHO represents the nation's 2,800 local governmental health departments that are on the frontlines of the Zika response.

Unless Congress acts now, the nation's public health system will be crippled in its ability to prevent the Zika virus from spreading further. Seven months ago the Obama Administration requested a \$1.9 billion in emergency supplemental funding to combat the Zika virus and ensure that agencies such as CDC and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are prepared to respond to the spread of Zika and develop a vaccine. Scientists have discovered a link between Zika and severe birth defects such as microcephaly and diseases like Guillain-Barre Syndrome and new information is emerging nearly every day.

Local health departments are engaged in educating the public and health care providers about Zika, conducting prevention activities through mosquito eradication; screening travelers from countries where the outbreak has surfaced, and ensuring pregnant women in local transmission areas have Zika testing available. With emergency funding for Zika, state and local health departments would be supported by CDC with increased virus readiness and response capacity focused on areas with ongoing Zika transmission; enhanced laboratory, epidemiology and surveillance capacity in at-risk areas and surge capacity to limit potential clusters of Zika virus in the United States.

If Congress fails to fund a 12-month Zika response, it may impact local transmission of Zika and the ability of local health departments to respond to the needs of residents in their communities. The costs of delay may well be seen in terms of both human suffering and economic burden to government health programs. Given that each infant with microcephaly may require at least \$4 million or more in care over a lifetime, the consequences would be catastrophic.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. For further information, please contact Eli Briggs, Senior Government Affairs Director at ebriggs@naccho.org or 202/507-4194.

Sincerely,



LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH
Executive Director

