

September 5, 2017

The Honorable Kathy Castor
United States House of Representatives
2052 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20515

Dear Representative Castor,

The undersigned organizations representing patients, health care providers, public health, and businesses write to offer our endorsement for your amendment to the House Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriations package (HR 3354) that would provide \$20 million in much-needed funds for the Zika Pregnancy and Infant Registry and the Zika-related Birth Defects Surveillance programs at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The Zika virus still poses a very real threat. Zika remains the only known vector-borne virus that can cause birth defects; as a result, a single mosquito bite can change the life of a newborn and family forever. Because of the work of CDC and other federal agencies, we now know that Zika virus can cause a spectrum of effects, ranging from microcephaly, which may be apparent before or at birth, to more subtle issues like hearing or vision loss, learning disabilities, and other long term conditions. However, there is still much more to be learned about Zika and its impacts through continued population-based surveillance and epidemiological research.

The Zika Pregnancy Registry tracks pregnant women who are confirmed to have contracted Zika during pregnancy and their infants for the first year of the child's life. In addition, CDC supports state and local efforts to collect and track information about babies born with birth defects, including microcephaly and other Zika-related birth defects. The information collected in these projects is used to better understand how Zika is spread, to determine how best to care for affected women and infants, to plan for the services they and their families will need, and to improve prevention and public awareness efforts. In addition to providing scientifically valid information on Zika virus and its impacts, these programs' innovative surveillance models can be used to identify other emerging infectious diseases and threats to maternal and child health.

The Zika Pregnancy and Infant Registry and the Zika-related Birth Defects Surveillance programs were created out of the \$1.1 billion in emergency supplemental funds passed by Congress last fall. Unfortunately, funding for these programs has already lapsed or will soon expire. Adding \$20 million to these critically important efforts will allow the CDC to continue this crucial research on how best to prevent the spread of the Zika virus and mitigate its impacts.

Thank you for offering this important amendment. We appreciate your leadership and look forward to working with you to protect pregnant women and their infants from the very real threat posed by the Zika virus. For more information, please contact Jaimie Vickery, Director of Federal Affairs for the March of Dimes at jvickery@marchofdimes.org or 202-292-2752.

Sincerely,

American College of Preventive Medicine
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Mosquito Control Association
American Public Health Association
American Sexual Health Association
American Society for Reproductive Medicine
Association of Public Health Laboratories
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals
Association of University Centers on Disabilities
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric & Neonatal Nurses
Black Women's Health Imperative
Children's Environmental Health Network
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
Cooley's Anemia Foundation
Family Voices
Friends of the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Genetic Alliance
Healthcare Ready
Jordan Child Development Early Intervention
March of Dimes
National Association for Rural Mental Health
National Association of County and City Health Officials
National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Birth Defects Prevention Network
National Environmental Health Association
National Network of Public Health Institutes
Newborn Foundation
OraSure Technologies, Inc.
Organization of Teratology Information Specialists
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Prevent Blindness
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine
Teratology Society
The Arc of the United States
The Family Resource Network
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America
United Cerebral Palsy
