

NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health

February 16, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom Cole,
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services &
Education Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro,
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services &
Education Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
H-305 the Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Rogers, Lowey, Cole and DeLauro:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I am writing in support of the President's \$1.8 billion emergency funding request and for sustained federal funding for public health programs to prepare for and respond to the Zika virus. NACCHO represents the nation's 2,800 local governmental health departments. These city, county, metropolitan, district, and tribal departments work every day to protect and promote the health and well-being of all people in their communities.

Local health officials believe that emerging infectious disease threats like Zika require ongoing vigilance, but the particular risks from this virus requires immediate, additional investments. Although not a new virus, 2015 marked the first widespread transmission of the Zika virus in the Americas. The virus is spread primarily by mosquitoes and usually causes only mild illness or no symptoms, but it may be causing a steep increase in birth defects in infants born to mothers who were infected during pregnancy. In January 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant to avoid travel to regions and countries with widespread Zika transmission or to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes there. The World Health Organization has recently declared a public health emergency of international concern due to the spike in microcephaly (babies born with smaller heads than expected) and Guillain-Barré syndrome in the Americas.

Local health departments are engaged in educating the public and health care providers about Zika, conducting prevention activities through mosquito eradication and screening travelers from countries where the outbreak has surfaced. NACCHO urges you to act quickly in providing



the President's requested \$1.8 billion in emergency funding for Zika virus - \$1.48 billion of which would be provided to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). This funding, outlined in the President's request, includes \$828 million for CDC surveillance activities and \$200 million for vaccine research and diagnostic development and procurement. With this funding 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 to reduce the opportunities for Zika transmission and surge capacity through rapid response teams to limit potential clusters of Zika virus in the United States.

Given limited investments in public health infrastructure, such surge funding for emergent threats like Zika is necessary. However, it remains important for Congress to sufficiently fund the core infectious disease (CID) program at CDC to help avert these situations in the future. CDC's CID includes the vector-borne diseases program that provides resources to state and local health departments to detect, control, and prevent bacteria and viruses transmitted by mosquitoes.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Hasbrouck', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH
Executive Director