

# NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

*The National Connection for Local Public Health*

June 20, 2016

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), I urge you to move quickly to provide the highest possible level of emergency funding to respond to the Zika virus threat. 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 in close collaboration with state health departments and CDC.

Unless Congress acts immediately, we risk squandering our nation's opportunity to prevent the Zika virus from gaining a foothold in the United States this summer. 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. In January 2016, CDC warned women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant to avoid travel to places with widespread Zika transmission or to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes there. Scientists have discovered a direct link between Zika and severe birth defects such as microcephaly and life threatening diseases like Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

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. 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.

Congress' failure to act to date may already mean that funding will be unable to reach states and localities until late summer or fall, wasting valuable weeks and months when aggressive preventive action is crucial. 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 is expected to require \$10 million in care over a lifetime, just 100 babies with microcephaly – a tiny fraction of all annual births in the United States – would total \$1 billion in costs.

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

Sincerely,



LaMar Hasbrouck, MD, MPH  
Executive Director

