

March 27, 2017

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro,

On behalf of our organizations representing patients, health care providers, persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities, public health, and businesses, we urge you to include ample funding to combat the Zika virus in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 appropriations bills. We commend Congress for providing supplemental funding for FY 2017, but it is imperative that Congress sustain that investment in FY 2018 and beyond.

Zika virus remains a significant public health threat. Over 200 individuals have been infected with Zika through local transmission in two states, while nearly 5,000 Americans across the country have travel-related infections. Among these are dozens of pregnant women, whose pregnancies are at risk for the serious birth defects Zika can cause. These numbers are dramatically higher in the US territories, where nearly 38,000 people and over 6,000 pregnant women, mostly in Puerto Rico, have been infected locally.

In order to combat this ongoing threat, we specifically request that the following programs be funded at the levels specified below in the FY 2018 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (Labor-HHS) Appropriations Bill.

- **National Institutes of Health – \$2 billion over current level with a proportionate increase for the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).**

Thanks to previous federal investment, NIAID is making significant progress toward developing a Zika vaccine. However, much of this research is at a critical stage and can only progress with adequate funding. NIAID predicts that, given appropriate resources, a Zika vaccine will likely become commercially available within the next few years.

An effective federal response must include research, prevention and treatment. NICHD is investigating how Zika virus infection affects reproductive health and pregnancy, along with the development and health of children exposed to Zika virus in the womb. This work is critical in understanding the impacts of the Zika virus, and how they may be mitigated.

Within NIH, we specifically request **\$10 million for the Zika in Pregnancy (ZIP) Study**, which is being conducted as a partnership between NIAID and NICHD. The study follows women from their first trimester throughout their pregnancies to determine if they become infected with Zika virus and, if so, health consequences for both mother and child. Infants are followed for at least one year after birth to track their development. In only the first year of operation, the study has provided valuable information on this rapidly emerging disease and its impacts.

- **HRSA’s Title V Maternal & Child Health Services Block Grant - \$650 million (\$11.8 million over FY 2016)**

The Title V MCH Block Grant is distributed to 59 states and jurisdictions to address the health needs of mothers, infants and children, which includes children with special health care needs and their families. From the onset of awareness about the Zika virus, Title V programs have been supporting the response to Zika through activities including: disseminating public health information and prevention tools and supplies to providers and the public; providing the technical expertise to support pregnancy registries and conduct ongoing birth defects surveillance; and handling newborn screening follow-up and connecting affected families with appropriate community resources. The Zika Coalition urges that funding for the Title V MCH Block Grant be increased in order to assist state, territorial and tribal programs in meeting the increasing demands of Zika prevention and the expected increase in affected families who will require additional services.

- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) – \$152.61 million (\$17 million over FY 2016)**

NCBDDD is the lead federal agency tasked with supporting vital surveillance, research, and prevention activities aimed at birth defects and developmental disabilities. Given the center’s expertise, NCBDDD staff are playing a key role in the international and domestic response to the Zika virus. With reprogrammed funds and supplemental funding provided in FY 2017, NCBDDD has helped build rapid response birth defects surveillance systems in 50 jurisdictions; coordinated efforts to educate families and providers about preventing Zika infection and caring for impacted families; and supported public health research that has improved our understanding of the impact of Zika virus on pregnant women and infants. To support ongoing Zika-related birth defects prevention, surveillance and research activities in FY 2018, the Zika Coalition asks the Committee to provide an increase of \$17 million to NCBDDD over FY 2016 enacted levels.

- **CDC National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases (NCEZID) – \$630 million (\$48 million over FY 2016)**

NCEZID is the CDC’s core infectious disease program, charged with detecting and responding to infectious disease outbreaks. NCEZID has played a pivotal role in responding to the Zika virus, including supporting local surveillance and vector control programs, providing guidance on laboratory testing for Zika virus, and operating the Zika Pregnancy Registry. Within NCEZID, the Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity cooperative agreement is pivotal in ensuring state, local, tribal, and territorial governments can strengthen public health workforce, disease detection systems, laboratory capacity and health information capacity to react to this threat. To sustain this important work in FY2018, the Zika Coalition requests an additional \$48 million for NCEZID over FY2016 enacted levels. We ask that a substantial portion of these funds be directed toward activities to strengthen epidemiologic surveillance and investigation, improve mosquito control and monitoring, and bolster laboratory capacity in state, territorial, tribal, and local public health departments.

- **CDC Public Health Emergency Preparedness Cooperative Agreement (PHEP) - \$705 million (\$45 million over FY 2016)**

PHEP supports state, local, tribal and territorial public health departments' ability to respond to public health crises. Increased funds should help communities maintain systems created with the supplemental funds, including the capacity to identify and investigate a potential or ongoing Zika outbreak, coordinate response with both government and non-government entities, and purchase and distribute Zika Prevention Kits that include insect repellent, window screens and other supplies. The Zika Coalition requests \$705 million for PHEP to sustain current Zika response efforts.

The Zika Coalition looks forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process to ensure that our country's resources to fight the Zika virus and mitigate its impacts are adequately funded. For more information, please contact Jaimie Vickery, Director of Federal Affairs for March of Dimes, at [jvickery@marchofdimes.org](mailto:jvickery@marchofdimes.org) or 202-659-1800.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Pediatrics  
American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy  
American Clinical Laboratory Association  
American College of Physicians  
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
American Medical Association  
American Public Health Association  
American Sexual Health Association  
American Society for Reproductive Medicine  
American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene  
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology  
Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs  
Association of Public Health Laboratories  
Association of Reproductive Health Professionals  
Association of State and Territorial Health Officials  
Association of University Centers on Disabilities  
Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses  
Black Women's Health Imperative  
Children's Environmental Health Network  
Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc. (COA)  
Cooley's Anemia Foundation  
Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists  
Easterseals  
Every Child By Two

Family Voices  
Genetic Alliance  
Grifols  
Healthcare Ready  
HIV Medicine Association  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
March of Dimes  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Birth Defects Prevention Network  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Hispanic Medical Association  
National Indian Health Board  
National Organization for Rare Disorders  
Newborn Foundation  
Novavax, Inc.  
OraSure Technologies, Inc.  
Organization of Teratology Information Specialists  
Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Public Health Institute  
Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities Coalition  
RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association  
Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine  
Teratology Society  
The Arc of the United States  
The Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America  
Trisomy 18 Foundation  
Trust for America's Health