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May 26, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Senator Reid:

On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association, I am writing to urge you to take immediate action to make available the necessary resources to prepare our nation to address the growing threat of the Zika virus. As has been widely publicized, local vector-borne transmission is already occurring in several U.S. Territories and is expected in the U.S. mainland soon.

Physicians are growing increasingly concerned about the urgent need for ensuring that the public health community is fully prepared to address this public health threat. Resources are required to expand mosquito surveillance and control in potentially impacted jurisdictions, conduct public education and outreach, enhance laboratory testing capacity, and support vaccine development, among other necessary steps.

The impact on human health from Zika infection is well documented. Sufficient evidence now exists to infer a causal relationship between prenatal Zika virus infection and microcephaly as well as other severe brain anomalies. Congenital infection due to Zika exposure is also associated with vision-threatening eye abnormalities. There is also growing evidence that the Zika virus is linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome. Physicians who are on the frontlines of diagnosing and treating those infected recognize that vigorous and thorough preparation is essential for the prevention and mitigation of potential outbreaks.

Time is growing short to make the critical investments that all agree are necessary to prevent local vector-borne transmission of the Zika virus and the potential health impacts of infection.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Madara". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James L. Madara, MD