

May 26, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Ryan, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Pelosi, Minority Leader Reid:

The undersigned medical associations strongly urge you to immediately pass legislation that would provide the highest possible funding level for research, prevention, control, and treatment of illnesses associated with the Zika virus that is commensurate with the public health emergency that the virus represents.

The Zika virus has the potential to rapidly become a public-health emergency that poses a grave risk to Americans, especially to pregnant women and their fetuses who may be at risk of severe birth defects, and more broadly, to women of child-bearing age who may become pregnant. There is simply no time to waste. Illness brought on by the Zika virus is rising rapidly by the exposure of travelers returning to the mainland U.S. and soon the country will be entering the summer months when mosquitos that carry and transmit the virus will be proliferating.

While we were encouraged that Congress is working on legislation to address the Zika issue, those efforts have not yet yielded an agreement that would deliver the funding and resources necessary to fully and robustly respond to the Zika virus. It's imperative that the House and Senate reach an agreement without further delay; every day that goes by without an agreement is a day where more patients will be at risk of being exposed to the virus. We also request that Congress exercise caution so that funding for other essential health initiatives is not placed at risk in order to fund a Zika response effort. Finally, we are concerned that funds that were to be used by CMS to develop the technology infrastructure to implement the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act could be diverted in a way that might undermine the ability of the agency to effectively administer the program as Congress intended.

We urge, therefore, that you and all members of Congress—without delay—enact legislation that would provide the highest funding level possible that is commensurate with the seriousness of this public health threat caused by the Zika virus. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wanda Filer, MD, MBA, FAAFP
President

American Academy of Family Physicians



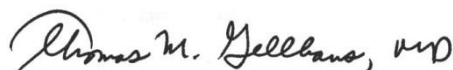
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