

February 23, 2016

Chairman Thad Cochran  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-128 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Barbara Mikulski  
Senate Appropriations Committee  
S-146A Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Hal Rogers  
House Appropriations Committee  
H-305 Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Nita Lowey  
House Appropriations Committee  
1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we  
\$1.9 billion in emergency funding to prepare for and respond to the Zika virus. We believe that  
emerging infectious disease threats like Zika require ongoing vigilance, but the particular risks  
from this virus require immediate, additional investments. We also urge Congress to allocate  
new money for the response, rather than repurposing funds that are designated for Ebola  
response and global health security.

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.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently declared a public health  
emergency of international concern due to the spike in microcephaly (babies born with  
abnormally small heads) and Guillain-Barré syndrome in the Americas.

In a recent report, *Outbreaks: Protecting Americans from Infectious Diseases*, Trust for  
found that the Ebola outbreak demonstrated how quickly a new threat can arise  
and how complacency and lapses in sustained support and funding for preparedness can leave  
countries and communities unnecessarily vulnerable.<sup>3</sup> We are especially concerned with how  
little is understood about Zika, including how microcephaly may be connected, how transmission  
and birth defects can be prevented, and any mitigation or treatment of these outcomes. U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> CDC, *Zika*. <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/>.

<sup>2</sup> CDC Travel Notice, *Zika Virus in the Americas*. <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/alert/zika-virus-south-america>

<sup>3</sup>



Healthcare Ready  
Healthy Kinder Inc.  
Infectious Diseases Society of America  
International Safety Equipment Association  
Madison Medical Center  
March of Dimes  
Nanotherapeutics, Inc.  
Nassau-Suffolk Hospital Council  
National Association of County and City Health Officials  
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners  
National Environmental Health Association  
National Foundation for Infectious Diseases  
National Network of Public Health Institutes  
National Recreation and Park Association  
Northwest Healthcare Response Network  
NYS Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO)