

ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

May 19, 2017

Ms. Anne Schuchat, MD  
Acting Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Schuchat:

We are writing to request additional information about our Zika virus outbreak preparedness and response capabilities in anticipation of the increase in cases of Zika virus infection over the summer months. According to recent press reports, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has told state health officials that federal funding for certain state Zika surveillance and education efforts may be discontinued in July.<sup>1</sup> According to those reports, the funding in jeopardy supports surveillance of Zika-associated birth defects, education of women and doctors about Zika-associated birth defects, and follow-up with families with babies born to women who were infected with the Zika virus during their pregnancy. State health officials have said that the absence of this funding “could harm their ability to prepare for an inevitable wave of new infections, or to provide services for babies already struggling with Zika-related birth defects.”<sup>2</sup>

In the U.S., every state, the District of Columbia, and three U.S. Territories have had individuals diagnosed with laboratory-confirmed Zika virus disease.<sup>3</sup> Between January 1, 2015 and May 10, 2017, there have been 5,273 Zika virus cases reported in the continental U.S.,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *As Zika Season Nears, States Brace for an End to CDC Funding*, PBS Frontline, (Apr. 21, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2017 Case Counts in the US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2017-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2016 Case Counts in the US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2016-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017); Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, *2015 Cases Counts in US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2015-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2016 Case Counts in the US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2016-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017).

including 218 cases in Florida and 6 cases in Texas acquired through presumed local mosquito-borne transmission.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, there have been 36,581 Zika virus cases reported in the U.S. Territories during that same time period, almost all of which have resulted from presumed local mosquito-borne transmission.<sup>6</sup> Since most people infected with the Zika virus will have mild or no symptoms, the number of reported cases is widely believed to underestimate the number of Americans who have been infected with the Zika virus.

Although the Zika virus does not usually cause major symptoms or complications in infected individuals, it poses a significant risk to pregnant women in the U.S. Infection during pregnancy can cause women to have babies with microcephaly, a very serious condition characterized by a small head and brain, and other birth defects. In 2016, 44 states reported cases of pregnant women with Zika virus,<sup>7</sup> and about 1 in 10 pregnant women in the continental U.S. with laboratory-confirmed Zika virus infection had a fetus or baby with Zika-related birth defects.<sup>8</sup> For those women infected during their first trimester, the rate was even higher: 15 percent of infants born to such women in the continental U.S. had Zika-related birth defects.<sup>9</sup>

The risk Zika virus poses to pregnant women remains so great in Puerto Rico, that on April 28, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tom Price renewed the Declaration of a Public Health Emergency in Puerto Rico, first declared on August 12, 2016, related to pregnant women and children born to pregnant women with the Zika virus. Additionally, because much remains unknown about the Zika virus, we still do not know the full range of birth defects and other health consequences for babies born to women infected with the Zika virus during pregnancy.

The risk of Zika virus to pregnant women in the U.S. led the Obama Administration to request \$1.89 billion in supplemental funding for the Zika response on February 22, 2016.<sup>10</sup> That request included \$828 million to support CDC and its state, local, and territorial partners' response efforts.<sup>11</sup> In September 2016, Congress passed and the President signed legislation into

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<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2017 Case Counts in the US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2017-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *2016 Case Counts in the US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2016-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017); Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, *2015 Cases Counts in US*, (<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/reporting/2015-case-counts.html>) (accessed May 15, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *Zika Virus Protecting Pregnant Women and Babies*, CDC Vital Signs, (Apr. 4, 2017).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Vital Signs: Update on Zika Virus-Associated Birth Defects and Evaluation of All U.S. Infants with Congenital Zika Virus Exposure – U.S. Zika Pregnancy Registry, 2016*, CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), Apr. 7, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Shaun Donovan, Director, Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President (Feb. 22, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

law that provided \$1.1 billion in Zika supplemental funding, including \$394 million for CDC.<sup>12</sup> In addition to the emergency appropriations from Congress, the Obama Administration reprogrammed \$589 million on April 6, 2016, including providing \$222 million to CDC for Zika virus control activities.<sup>13</sup>

While this funding has supported CDC and its state, local, and territorial partners' response efforts up to this point, urgent questions exist as to whether sufficient funding is available to respond to the probable uptick in Zika virus infections during the upcoming summer travel and mosquito season. Therefore, we respectfully request answers to the following questions by June 9, 2017:

1. How much CDC funding remains available for Zika virus activities in fiscal year 2017?
2. Because Congress provided \$434 million less in emergency funding than requested by the Obama Administration, and the \$222 million that the Obama Administration was able to reprogram for CDC Zika virus activities did not cover this shortfall, what Zika grants, programs, or activities has CDC been unable to support due to a lack of resources?
3. Are there state or local public health grants, programs, or activities that will lose CDC funding in July as reported in the article, *As Zika Season Nears, States Brace for an end of CDC Funding (PBS Article)*?<sup>14</sup> Will that funding reduction affect our ability to test individuals for Zika virus infection and ensure that babies born to women with laboratory-confirmed or suspected Zika virus infection during pregnancy are connected to appropriate follow-up care, including testing and treatment services?
4. If federal funding for state and local surveillance initiatives is reduced as detailed in the *PBS article*, what will be the effect on the accuracy, quality, and thoroughness of CDC's federal surveillance data in 2017? What will be the effect on ensuring that babies born to women infected with Zika virus during pregnancy are appropriately monitored to detect Zika-related birth defects or health impairments as well as are connected to the follow-up health services they need?
5. If the incidence of Zika virus and Zika-related birth defects in 2017 remains similar to that in 2016, how much federal funding does CDC and its state, local, and territorial partners need to adequately respond? What about if the incidence of Zika virus and Zika-related birth defects dramatically increases in 2017?

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<sup>12</sup> *Zika Response Funding: Request and Congressional Action*, Congressional Research Service (Sept. 30, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *As Zika Season Nears, States Brace for an End to CDC Funding*, PBS Frontline, (Apr. 21, 2017).

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6. Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa experienced local mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission in 2016. Many other states remain at risk of local transmission due to the presence of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito in those states. Do all at-risk areas in the U.S. have adequate capability to respond to and control outbreaks of local mosquito-borne Zika virus transmission in 2017?

We appreciate your prompt attention to this issue and look forward to your response. Should you have any questions, please contact Waverly Gordon with the Committee on Energy and Commerce, Democratic Staff at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Ranking Member



Gene Green  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Health



Diana DeGette  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and  
Investigations



Kathy Castor  
Vice Ranking Member  
Committee on Energy and Commerce