



Wisconsin Public Health Association
Wisconsin Association of Local Health
Departments and Boards



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September 2, 2016

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

Dear Speaker Ryan:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards and Wisconsin Public Health Association, we urge you to move quickly to provide the highest possible level of emergency funding to respond to the Zika virus outbreak. We also urge Congress to explicitly specify that FY2016 funds repurposed for Zika from the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) be restored.

Unless Congress acts immediately to pass a bipartisan bill that can be successfully signed into law, we risk squandering our opportunity to prevent the Zika virus from gaining a foothold in the United States this year. Scientists have discovered a direct link between Zika and severe birth defects such as microcephaly and life threatening diseases like Guillain-Barre Syndrome. Each case of microcephaly can cost up to \$10 million over the lifetime of a child, in addition to the devastating emotional impacts on the family. The public health and health care communities are on the front lines of responding to Zika and preventing harm to the public from this unprecedented disease.

Media attention has heightened public awareness of the Zika virus. Even though Wisconsin is not at high risk for locally-acquired cases, travel-associated cases of Zika could occur in our state. In addition, funds are needed to conduct public education campaigns to make sure that people are informed about how to identify whether they are at risk and how to prevent the disease. "Zika has the potential for profound lifelong social, emotional and financial impacts on our children and families. The time is now to financially support prevention efforts that will benefit all Americans," stated Sue Galoff, Pierce County Health Officer and WALHDAB Co-President.

In April, CDC cut \$44 million from public health emergency preparedness (PHEP) grants to provide funds to Zika efforts. This resulted in a 6.4% cut to PHEP funding in our state, which reduces the ability of local health departments to be prepared for emergencies like floods, tornados and other infectious diseases.

CDC is expected to run out of money to fight Zika by the end of September. Without additional resources, the CDC will have a severely limited capacity to support mosquito control and surveillance efforts and to further improve diagnostic testing for Zika. In addition, CDC will be severely constrained in its ability to provide any additional funding to states and localities, and in its ability to help manage additional local Zika outbreaks, including sending emergency teams to be on-site and testing specimens to determine the presence of Zika virus in communities.

Thank you for your attention to this critical public health issue. Please contact us if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Sue Galoff, WALHDAB Co-President
John Smith, WALHDAB Co-President
Linda Conlon, WPHA President