

September 8th, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-230, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-146A, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear House and Senate Leadership and Appropriations Chairs:

As you return from the August recess and resume consideration of legislation to respond to the worsening Zika crisis, the undersigned civil rights, labor, environment, health and faith organizations urge you to quickly pass a comprehensive bill that includes sufficient funding for prevention and does not include any ideological policy riders.

As you know, the Zika virus has been spreading rapidly by mosquitos and sexual transmission in countries across Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Puerto Rico. People who live in the continental United States are now also contracting the Zika virus, with states like Florida, Texas and New York continuing to see an increasing number of cases. Indeed, [the Center for American Progress has estimated that over 2 million pregnant women](#) in the South and Mid-Atlantic regions are at potential risk for Zika transmission during the summer and fall months. There is a lot the medical community still needs to determine about the Zika virus, but it is clear that the virus poses serious risks for pregnant women. When a fetus is exposed to the virus during pregnancy, Zika can cause microcephaly and other severe brain conditions. It is also associated with impaired fetal growth, hearing loss in infants, and other complications for pregnant women, including miscarriage.

We were disappointed that Congress failed to pass a comprehensive Zika response package before leaving for a seven-week recess earlier this summer. The conference package that passed the House in the middle of the night on June 23, and that has now failed three times in the Senate, is not a serious response to this public health emergency. The package falls \$800 million short of the President's request, strips funds from the Affordable Care Act and the ongoing public health response to Ebola, fails to provide dedicated funding for family planning and maternal health services, uses a funding mechanism that limits the types of providers who can provide critical services during a public health emergency, and rolls back important protections under the Clean Water Act.

It is critical that Congress quickly pass a clean funding bill that provides sufficient funding to address the Zika virus at home and abroad, void of ideological policy riders that only needlessly serve to distract from the urgency of this public health crisis.

Sincerely,

Center for American Progress
Sierra Club
The General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church
Global Progressive Hub
AFL-CIO
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
American Medical Students Association
AFSCME
American Association for Justice
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Baptist Churches USA
American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABCUSA)
American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO
Better World Campaign
Black Women's Health Imperative
Catholics for Choice
Coalition for Health Funding
Coalition on Human Needs
Doctors for America
Earthjustice
Every Child Matters
Faiths for Safe Water
Franciscan Action Network
Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.
Jewish Women International (JWI)
Latin America Working Group

League of Conservation Voters
MomsRising
NARAL Pro-Choice America
National Abortion Federation
National Association of Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association
National Health Law Program
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Organization for Women
National Physicians Alliance
National Women's Health Network
National Women's Political Caucus
PARO (Presbyterians Affirming Reproductive Options)
People For the American Way
Physicians for Reproductive Health
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Public Citizen
Religious Institute
Service Employees International Union
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Voices for Progress