Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 15, 2016

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

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

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Labor, Health and Human Services &
Education Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
2358-B Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Labor, Health and Human Services &
Education Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Rogers, Lowey, Cole, and DeLauro:

We write with urgency in support of emergency supplemental funding to combat the Zika virus. We respectfully urge you to not solely rely on redirected funds provided to fight Ebola for the purpose of combating the Zika virus. The redirection of these funds is insufficient and falls short of the robust response necessary to adequately address the looming threat the virus poses. If emergency supplemental funding is not approved, measures to fight Zika will be delayed or even stopped, putting the U.S. in a dangerous public health position.

As you know, this particular outbreak of the Zika virus began in Brazil in 2015 and can be spread through the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is present in the United States. There are currently more than 300 travel-associated U.S. cases that have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 27 of which are pregnant women. Public health officials are predicting local mosquito-borne transmission in the continental U.S. given the upcoming spring and summer months. . The CDC has confirmed that Zika is a cause of microcephaly and is likely a cause of Guillain-Barre syndrome and other neurological disorders and has classified this outbreak as a "public health emergency of international concern."

While the country races to mitigate the spread of Zika virus, the CDC recently announced cuts to state and local Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) including $3.6 million, or 10%, in the state of Texas because of Congress' refusal to pass supplemental funding. This cut will impact every health department that receives PHEP funding, and may impact staffing, training, intelligence gathering, and other critical services. Given limited investment in our public health infrastructure and especially emergency preparedness, funding for known emerging threats is not only necessary, it is required.

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The emergency supplemental funding request of $1.8 billion will allow us to be aggressive with the Zika virus domestically and internationally, enabling us to prevent and respond actively to Zika while reducing the possibility for future outbreaks. This emergency funding package includes $1.48 billion for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) with $828 million of that going to the CDC to support Zika readiness and response capacity and enhance vector control. The CDC is also responsible for funding state and local health departments to deploy many of these activities which are the backbone of our public health infrastructure. Also included in the HHS funding amount is $200 million for vaccine research and diagnostic development and procurement. Separately, the U.S. Agency for International Development would receive $335 million for affected countries' vector control and transmission and the Department of State would receive $41 million for international public health actions.

While Zika virus is a threat for several communities, Texas is particularly susceptible. In 2014, Dallas, Texas experienced the first Ebola case in the United States. Dallas also confirmed the first case of U.S. sexually-transmitted Zika virus. With an estimated population of 7.5 million residents in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, it is imperative we act to mitigate the risk to the public. As members of Congress from Texas, we urge you to act on this request because we must ensure local health officials have the funds and resources necessary to stay a step ahead of this disease in order to protect the American people.

Sincerely,

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Beto O'Rourke
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Henry Cuellar
Member of Congress