

Letter to Senate and House Conferees
Regarding Zika Funding Provisions

June 15, 2016

Dear Conferees:

On behalf of our nearly 5,000 member hospitals, health systems and other health care organizations, and our 43,000 individual members, the American Hospital Association (AHA) urges you to support Zika funding at the \$1.1 billion level with new funding, rather than repurpose funds from other public health programs, in order to prevent local transmission of the Zika virus in the United States and to develop a vaccine. We are deeply concerned about the health implications of the Zika virus in the United States and the untold number of children who have the potential to be born with microcephaly or other devastating birth defects if the Zika virus takes hold in our country.

The United States has a critical opportunity right now to prevent the local transmission of this devastating virus, and we know how to accomplish this obligation, but adequate funding is necessary. With adequate funding, state and local public health departments would be able to respond with robust mosquito abatement programs, enhanced laboratory, epidemiology and surveillance capacity and surge capacity through rapid response teams to limit potential Zika virus transmission. We urge Congress to take action now due to increased mosquito populations during the summer and the time needed to get funding and resources into the field.

The prevention of Zika virus transmission is a sound investment, both in terms of preventing human suffering and in economic costs to government health programs. Each infant with microcephaly is expected to require between \$1 million to \$10 million in care over a lifetime. If hundreds or thousands of infants in the United States are born with microcephaly, the costs would easily surpass the \$1.1 billion needed now for prevention.



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The United States has never before faced a situation where we were able to prevent the transmission of such a devastating virus. We urge you to quickly pass a conference agreement with Zika funding at \$1.1 billion. We look forward to continuing to work with Congress to ensure the health of Americans during this time of uncertainty.

Sincerely,

//s//

Thomas P. Nickels
Executive Vice President