



May 19, 2016

Dear Representative:

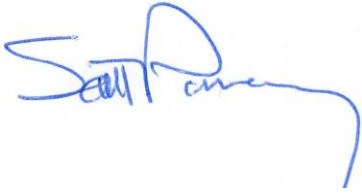
On behalf of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Centers (IDDRC) that are supported by the National Institute on Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), I urge you to support the greatest possible level of emergency supplemental funding to prepare for and respond to the Zika virus during consideration of Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations bills. We strongly urge you to oppose efforts to use other important public health funding as an offset. In addition, we encourage the funds to be apportioned to NICHD and other institutes working on the impact of the Zika Virus.

As you know, the Zika virus has been determined to cause microcephaly, a serious birth defect of the brain, in many babies born to mothers who contract the virus while pregnant. Thousands of cases of microcephaly have been observed among infants in South and Central America in recent months. Zika has already been diagnosed in almost 500 travelers returning to the U.S. from these areas, including close to 50 pregnant women, and as many as one in five residents in Puerto Rico may become infected with the virus this year. As the summer months approach and we enter mosquito season, Americans across more than 40 states will be directly exposed to the mosquitos that spread this virus, and millions of mothers could be at risk for contracting Zika during pregnancy. Additionally, men who have contracted Zika from mosquitos may sexually transmit it to their partner, extending the virus's reach further.

If adequate funding is secured, we may be able to slow the spread of Zika dramatically and give scientists time to develop and test a vaccine. However, without such action we fear that the number of newborns born with significant intellectual disabilities will only rise further. In addition to the impact on individual children and their families, the CDC estimates that the average lifetime cost of caring for every child born with microcephaly could amount to several millions of dollars *per child*. An epidemic of microcephaly would exert significant costs on health systems in communities with already strained resources, leaving lasting consequences not just for families, but for our nation's schools, social services, and medical institutions.

We cannot afford to delay action or respond without providing scientists and public health officials with the full amount of resources that they need. We urge you to act immediately to provide the full emergency resources necessary to protect pregnant women, infants and children from the Zika virus and its harmful effects.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott Pomeroy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Scott Pomeroy, Director  
Children's Hospital Boston Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center