

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 8, 2016

## VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

Thomas Frieden, M.D.  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Director Frieden:

I know you share my concern about the Zika threat and the need to protect mothers and children. That is why I was troubled to read about the slow distribution, by the federal government, of available funds to combat Zika.

On April 6, 2016 the administration announced that \$589 (\$510 million from unspent Ebola funding) million had been found available to be quickly redirected to be spent on a Zika response<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, as of today, only \$112 million – approximately one-fifth of the \$589 million dollars available has been distributed<sup>2</sup>. Three months seems to be a long time to wait to respond to an impending outbreak.

Additionally, you recently urged the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to consider aerial spraying for mosquito control. In your statement, you said “The continental United States has been using aerial spraying for decades to reduce mosquito populations, and we urge the people of Puerto Rico to consider using the same proven and safe tactic.”<sup>3</sup> Again, it seems like this recommendation is very late in coming.

Like many of my colleagues, I find it frustrating that this administration isn’t better prepared for emergency illnesses. It is my understanding the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is meant to deal with an unexpected outbreak, yet Congress had to approve \$5.4 billion in emergency funding for Ebola late in 2014<sup>4</sup> and then the Senate had to approve another \$1.1 billion in emergency funding for Zika this year<sup>5</sup>.

Currently, there is an outbreak of another mosquito-borne disease in Angola – yellow fever. With the global travel, this could become another significant outbreak.

1 <http://www.crs.gov/Reports/R44549>

2 <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/zika-virus-funds-congress-fight-225183>

3 <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jul/6/cdc-urges-puerto-rico-start-aerial-mosquito-spray/>

4 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-12-10/congress-nearly-grants-obama-s-ebola-wish-list-with-5-4b>

5 <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/05/zika-virus-funding-senate-house-223282>

CDC has an annual budget of \$11.7 billion dollars. Americans want the assurance that the tax money they send to Washington is not spent in a reckless or haphazard way.

With this in mind, would you please answer the following questions?

1. Please explain why it has taken months from the time funds available were identified and the eventual distribution of those funds to combat Zika.
2. Is there a strategic plan at the CDC for addressing outbreaks of illnesses?
3. What are the different types of disease outbreaks to which CDC responds?
4. How does the CDC prioritize these types of disease outbreaks in terms of funding?
5. What are the contingency funding plans of the CDC in order to be able to respond in a timely manner to unexpected outbreaks?
6. What contingency plans does the CDC have in order to have sufficient yellow fever vaccine available should that need arise?

A written response to these questions is requested by July 29, 2016. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Karen Summar, my Health Policy Director at (202) 224-3744.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman Senate Judiciary Committee

CC: Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Honorable Sylvia Burwell  
Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response, Dr. Nicole Lurie

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