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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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January 28, 2016

Dr. Thomas Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden:

As you well know, over the last several weeks, multiple cases of the dangerous “Zika” virus have been identified in the United States. We write to better understand what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is doing to address the spread of the virus and to prepare our country, including state and local public health officials, for any potential outbreak.

Since last May, the Zika virus has spread at an alarming rate throughout a number of Central and South American countries, as well as Puerto Rico. For decades, this virus was believed to cause minor physical symptoms, such as a fever, without much evidence of more severe or life-threatening effects. However, this recent outbreak has coincided with a large uptick in cases of microcephaly, a developmental condition in which affected children are born with abnormally small heads and underdeveloped brains.

Though no official connection has yet been made between the Zika virus and microcephaly, it is our understanding that both Brazilian officials and the CDC have identified several cases where children born with microcephaly also tested positive for the Zika virus. It is important that the CDC, in partnership with the international community, continue to study any possible links between the two afflictions, and provide the general public with the best information available to avoid contracting Zika or developing microcephaly.

While it appears that the infected individuals here in the United States contracted the virus while traveling abroad, and that the virus is not spreading locally, that may not remain the case. The *Aedes* species of mosquito, which transmits the virus, is prevalent in a large portion of this country so it may only be a matter of time before the number of infections increases here at home.

We commend the proactive approach undertaken by the CDC thus far to investigate the Zika outbreak abroad and alert the public and state and local health officials about the risks associated with the virus. However, we believe more can and should be done to enhance preparedness and ascertain the nature of the threat Zika poses to our country.

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To this end, and in light of President Obama's call for urgent action on this matter, we ask that you provide the following information no later than February 11, 2016:


- A description of how the CDC plans to work with state and local health officials to develop a national Zika surveillance strategy for humans and mosquitos, including the mechanisms used to execute the strategy, the estimated timeline for implementation, and any planned coordination with other Federal entities such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Please include any information developed to date for this strategy and any planned federal efforts for mosquito control in affected areas;
- A description of current and planned future assistance the CDC is providing to Brazil and other impacted countries, as well as Puerto Rico;
- A description of resources and programs currently available to state and local health officials to address a potential future Zika outbreak;
- The CDC's estimates of the likelihood and potential scale of a Zika outbreak occurring in the United States; and,
- A description of any additional coordination, research (including for medical countermeasures), assistance or public awareness activities CDC plans to undertake to further prepare for the possibility of a Zika outbreak in the United States.

Thank you for your leadership and attention to this important issue. As your work continues, we ask that you please keep us updated on the spread of the Zika virus in the United States and its impacts on our communities. [REDACTED]

With best personal regards, we remain

Sincerely yours,

  
Ron Johnson  
Chairman

  
Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member