



National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

May 18, 2016

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
2406 Rayburn Hob
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Rogers:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHHLA), a coalition of 40 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations to urge you and your colleagues to take action to appropriate the requested \$1.9 billion dollars to address and prevent the spread of the Zika virus. The Obama administration has requested these funds in order to allow for additional mosquito control, lab testing and training programs for medical professionals and community members. The current appropriations measure before the House is inadequate for carrying out those important functions.

We are deeply concerned that members of the House seek to severely underfund both remedial and preventative measures, particularly since we are quickly approaching mosquito season in many parts of the country and proven cases of illness and death have been detected in the Caribbean, North America and Central America, among other places. This global outbreak is already having devastating and serious health consequences in Puerto Rico and on populations in parts of Latin America, including birth defects, incomplete birth development and other reproductive health issues. Given that further testing is required we cannot be certain of the full range of consequences or irreversible harm that will be caused by the spread of this virus.

Congress must not allow its political differences to place the public health of our nation at risk. As it stands, Congress's failure to act has forced our government to reallocate important resources away from the treatment and prevention of Ebola to cover the immediate expenses related to the Zika virus. Our nation should not trade proper prevention, care and needed research related to one serious illness for another because of political maneuvering and delay, particularly where the National Institutes for Health is currently conducting vital research that is necessary for the development of a vaccine for Ebola.

NHHLA is particularly concerned about the health and welfare of women of childbearing age, children, and the elderly. In addition, we are especially concerned about marginalized community members who might be at risk of increased exposure to mosquitos because of trash, standing water and other factors that result in a heightened presence of mosquitos. In particular, agricultural workers, particularly

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Justice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation

migrant farmworkers who tend to live near the fields where they work, are at risk for both increased exposure to mosquitos as well as mosquito spraying. Given that farmworkers are already at risk for exposure to other dangerous chemicals, we are concerned that little or no information is presently available to determine the synergistic effects of exposure to multiple chemicals over a short-term period, not to mention long-term exposure.

Additionally, Latinas experience disproportionately high rates of unintended pregnancy and face consistent challenges to accessing contraception that is affordable and available. Latinas encounter barriers such as cost, lack of transportation and lack of geographically available clinics. The community needs such resources in order to reduce the impact of Zika. Finally, there is a pressing need to provide funding for the development of a Zika vaccine.

Therefore, it is necessary that Congress allocate the appropriate resources to allow for funds to prevent the spread of Zika, the tools necessary to treat anyone who falls ill with the virus and the monies needed to conduct the proper testing and research on the impact of this disease on those who are infected. Additionally, medical professionals require access to information about the symptoms, treatment, and consequences of exposure. Community members also need access to linguistically and culturally appropriate education about the virus, symptoms, health consequences and treatment.

For all of these reasons, we call on members of Congress to act swiftly to address this global health crisis. The Zika virus stands to have widespread and adverse impact on Latinos and other community members throughout our country.

The NHLA stands ready to lend its expertise, both as medical professionals and as experts on effective population education tools for reaching Latino community members. Feel free to contact Dr. Elena Rios, Co-Chair of NHLA's Health Committee at [202-628-5895](tel:202-628-5895) or by email at Erios@nhmamd.org to schedule a time to speak.

Sincerely,



Hector E. Sanchez
Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda
Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement

Cc: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives