

**Chairman Roy Blunt Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and
Education, and Related Agencies**

Hearing to review to Emerging Health Threats and the Zika Supplemental

February 11, 2016

(As prepared for delivery.)

Good morning. Thank you, Dr. Frieden and Dr. Fauci, for appearing before the Subcommittee today to discuss the Zika outbreak and the Administration's \$1.8 billion supplemental funding request. We look forward to hearing your testimonies.

No sooner than the global health concerns over Ebola subsided, we are faced with another looming threat. The Zika virus has developed from an illness with mild, flu-like symptoms to one that may lead to severe birth defects or paralysis. There is no rapid test, specific treatment, or vaccine.

Little has been done in the United States to prepare for the threat of the Zika virus. While the National Institutes of Health and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention spend some funding on viruses like Zika that are transmitted by mosquitoes, neither agency currently spends any significant resources specifically on Zika.

After the Department of Health and Human Services received \$2.7 billion to spend on Ebola and other infectious diseases, more than half remains unspent, and none of the remaining funding thus far has been used for the current Zika outbreak.

This shows the fundamental problem in our public health system: it has a short attention span. We immediately forget about the outbreak that came before and do not adequately plan for the ones on the horizon. Today, we are asking about Zika. Last year, it was Ebola. What will it be next year?

As we examine the Administration's request for supplemental funding, we need to make certain that we are focusing resources not just on today's crisis, but on the infrastructure to prepare for tomorrow's as well. It is time to approach emerging health threats more proactively. We need to examine our capacity to respond to ever-changing threats, take precautions, and focus efforts on strategic planning.

Thank you.

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