



Legislation Text

File #: 16-0567, **Version:** 1

Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Public Health Division, recommending the Board:

- 1) Approve and authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support to encourage Congress to identify dedicated funding for Zika virus response rather than reducing emergency preparedness funding; and
- 2) Authorize the HHS Director and the Public Health Officer to engage with Congressman Tom McClintock regarding support of dedicated funding for Zika virus response rather than reducing emergency preparedness funding.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION:

Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) recommending the Board authorize the Chair to sign a letter to Congressman McClintock requesting support of an initiative to identify dedicated funding for the Zika virus response, without reducing Fiscal Year (FY) 2016/17 Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) funding allocations to states.

While there is agreement that Zika virus response and research needs to be funded, the current proposal is to reduce the PHEP budget. This could have negative consequences in El Dorado County, specifically, an estimated reduction of \$22,000 in PHEP grant funding representing approximately a ten percent reduction compared with FY 2015/16.

It is HHS's understanding that Zika research and response activities (such as mosquito surveillance and case investigations) are most likely to be performed by national (e.g., Center for Disease Control and Prevention) and state agencies. To a limited extent it will likely include local public health agencies in those geographic areas most likely to encounter the virus first, such as those on the southern borders of the United States, rather than being directed to jurisdictions such as the County of El Dorado. If approved, El Dorado County's PHEP funding could decrease by approximately ten percent (\$22,000) without any additional funding for Zika related activities.

DISCUSSION / BACKGROUND:

The World Health organization stated the Zika virus is an emerging mosquito-borne virus that was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in rhesus monkeys through a monitoring network of sylvatic yellow fever. It was subsequently identified in humans in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Outbreaks of Zika virus disease have been recorded in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific.

Zika virus is a mild disease and most people with the virus do not have symptoms. However, the recent rise in the spread of Zika virus in Brazil has been accompanied by an unprecedented rise in the number of children being born with unusually small heads (microcephaly). In addition, several countries, including Brazil, reported a steep increase in Guillain-Barré syndrome-a neurological

disorder that could lead to paralysis and death. Based on a growing body of preliminary research, there is scientific consensus that Zika virus can cause microcephaly and Guillain-Barré syndrome.

Zika virus is most commonly transmitted to a person through the bite of an infected mosquito; however, male-to-female and male-to-male sexual transmission has also been documented. Other modes of transmission such as blood transfusion and perinatal transmission are currently being investigated. Zika virus disease outbreaks were reported for the first time from the Pacific in 2007 and 2013 (Yap and French Polynesia, respectively), and in 2015 from the Americas (Brazil and Colombia) and Africa (Cabo Verde). In total, 64 countries and territories have reported transmission of Zika virus since 1 January 2007.

Over the past several months, in response to the increasing number of reported cases of Zika virus, several bills have been developed at a federal level to identify funds for the prevention and treatment of Zika virus. Unfortunately these bills seek to transfer funding currently identified for Public Health Emergency Preparedness activities away from counties for the purposes of national efforts toward Zika prevention. The transfer of these funds away from counties to a national response to Zika will have a significant impact upon the County PHEP activities. For this reason, HHSA is recommending the Board approve a letter of support to identify funding that would not impact the PHEP program funding.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board could decide to accept the federal government's proposal to reduce PHEP funding to cover Zika research and response, which would reduce EDC's grant money by an estimated \$22,000 for FY 2016/17. PHEP grant funds are mainly used to fund staff time, so a reduction in funding would result in either a reduction in staff assigned to PHEP or backfilling the loss of grant funding with Public Health realignment funds.

OTHER DEPARTMENT / AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board approve this item.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with this Board item as this is simply a recommendation to sign a letter of support and allow staff to engage in discussions with our local Congressman.

CLERK OF THE BOARD FOLLOW UP ACTIONS

- 1) Clerk of the Board to obtain Chair signature on two (2) copies of the letter of support and mail to addressee.
- 2) Clerk of the Board to provide one signed letter to HHSA Contracts Unit at 3057 Briw Road.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENT:

N/A

CONTACT

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