

JACK REED
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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3903

February 2, 2016

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell
Secretary
The Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC, 20201

Dear Secretary Burwell:

I write to urge you to prioritize efforts to combat the Zika virus, among other emerging mosquito-borne illnesses. Over the last few years, we have seen the introduction of mosquito-borne illnesses such as dengue, chikungunya, and Zika in the Western Hemisphere, including the United States. It is imperative that we take steps now to strengthen our public health infrastructure to keep these diseases from spreading widely here in the U.S. and to continue to provide support to countries fighting outbreaks.

I am encouraged by the quick action taken by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to inform the public about Zika, including issuing travel advisories for affected countries and for at-risk populations, such as pregnant women. I urge you to continue these efforts, including ensuring this information is made available in a variety of languages and conducting outreach in communities, especially those with Latin American populations, in which travel to the affected regions may be more frequent.

State and local public health departments will be critical to strengthening efforts to prevent and diagnose cases of Zika, among other mosquito-borne illnesses in the United States. While transmission of mosquito-borne illnesses has been limited in the United States so far, it is important that you continue to work with state and local public health departments so they have the most up to date information on diagnostics and testing for mosquito-borne illnesses. In addition, I urge you to develop best practices for vector control interventions to help prevent cases of these illnesses.

I also ask that you ensure the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and CDC have adequate resources to prioritize research on testing, diagnostics, and prevention of mosquito-borne illnesses such as Zika, dengue, and chikungunya. In addition, I request that you fast-track research on possible vaccines for Zika, as well as these other illnesses. Although it has not been confirmed that Zika is the cause of the increase in cases of microcephaly and other birth defects, there is serious cause for concern and we must act quickly to prevent cases of Zika in the U.S. and to mitigate any secondary health impacts.

Should there be additional resources or authorities that you believe will be critical as you work to combat the spread of Zika and mitigate its effects, I ask you to share that information with me.

Washington, DC:

728 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-3903
(202) 224-4642

Rhode Island:

1000 Chapel View Boulevard, Suite 290
Cranston, RI 02920-3074
(401) 943-3100

One Exchange Terrace, Room 408
Providence, RI 02903-1744
(401) 528-5200

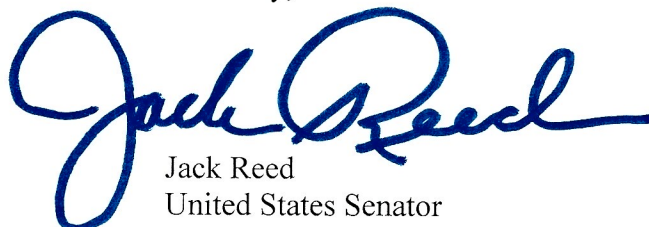
1 (800) 284-4200

TDD Relay Rhode Island
1 (800) 745-5555

<http://reed.senate.gov>

Again, thank you for your attention to this critical matter, and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack Reed". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jack" and last name "Reed" clearly legible.

Jack Reed
United States Senator