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February 8, 2016

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2322A Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Pitts
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health
420 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health
2470 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tim Murphy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigation
2332 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigation
2368 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Urge Hearing on the Zika Virus

Dear Chairman Upton, Ranking Member Pallone, Chairman Pitts, Ranking Member Green, Chairman Murphy and Ranking Member DeGette:

Thank you for your recent letters to officials at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) asking for briefings to better understand the government's preparedness and response to the Zika virus. We are all working to better understand the virus and that is why I respectfully request you hold a hearing on the Zika virus as soon as possible so we can hear directly from experts and are better able to help educate our neighbors on the virus and prevent its spread, especially in Gulf Coast states like Florida.

As you are aware, we have seen an increase in the Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere since last year – with the greatest impact in countries with tropical climates like Brazil. We are starting to see cases in the United States, including 14 known cases in Florida and three in my home county of Hillsborough. A recent *New York Times* article entitled “Air Travel Between U.S. and Zika-Affected

Areas” includes a map of the risk of Zika transmission in the United States (attached). My home state of Florida is designated in bright red for year-round risk. The type of mosquito that carries the Zika virus is found in warmer regions and the *New York Times* reports that it is a common type of mosquito in Florida. At the request of many public health professionals, the Governor of Florida declared a public health emergency last week for the counties with current cases. Many questions remain however about transmission and prevention and I urge you to organize a hearing with experts as soon as possible to help disseminate the best information.

There is still much to learn about the virus, how it is transmitted and how it impacts those infected – especially pregnant women and children. Having the appropriate government officials testify before the committee will help our fellow Americans better understand the current state of the Zika virus in the United States, how our public health infrastructure is working to address and prevent the virus in communities like mine and what the research community is doing to learn more about the impact of the virus and appropriate treatments for patients. The Zika outbreak also provides an important reminder of essential investments in our public health infrastructure, prevention and education. While the State of Florida has significantly cut back on such investments in public health and our local/state health departments, it is our responsibility to assist local medical professionals, non-profit organizations and mosquito-fighting agencies with timely information.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
United States Representative
Florida – District 14

