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Thomas M. Gellhaus, MD, FACOG

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A Message to the US Congress from ACOG President Thomas Gellhaus, MD on the Zika Virus Conference Report

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing more than 57,000 physicians and partners in women's health, is extremely disappointed with the lack of meaningful action on emergency Zika funding. Ob-gyns are on the front lines of counseling and treating women whose pregnancies are at risk of being affected by the Zika virus and its associated devastating birth defects. Our Nation urgently needs a comprehensive approach to understanding, preventing, and treating the virus. We call on Congress to immediately pass and send to the President legislation that provides adequate Zika emergency funds and ensures access to care at all qualified settings.

While ACOG is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide ob-gyns across the continental United States and US territories with the most up-to-date information, the frightening reality is that there are still more questions than answers. This uncertainty is particularly alarming for pregnant women and women of reproductive age who have been exposed to the virus, and women whose partners have been exposed.

That's why right now, one of the best defenses against the birth defects associated with the Zika virus is preventing pregnancy in the first place. Access to contraception, both domestically and abroad, is crucial in our work to address the Zika virus outbreak.

Research into the Zika virus is essential, and we continue to urge Congress to fund this research at an adequate level for meaningful outcomes. However, we know that research outcomes will take time. Immediate efforts to improve access to contraception and prevent pregnancy will help us to avoid the long-term effects associated with the Zika virus.

The Zika virus outbreak is a stark reminder that family planning is essential preventive medicine, and is one of our most effective weapons in our war on Zika.

Congress should treat Zika like the emergency it is and swiftly enact a bill, free from poison pills and offsets. America's women and families are counting on it.