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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE
AND OVERHEAD ARCHITECTURE

July 11, 2015

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Cornyn
Majority Whip
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sirs:

I would like to call your attention to the alarming numbers of Puerto Ricans who are falling prey to the Zika virus. I write to urge you to take immediate action to fully fund the President's \$1.9 billion emergency request—without stealing funds to fight Ebola—and to grant Puerto Rico the desperate relief and assistance needed to fully and aggressively combat this epidemic.

As one of five Puerto Rican Members of Congress, I am personally invested in the ongoing health crisis the Island is facing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported nearly 2,400 Zika cases, 44 hospitalizations, and one death so far in Puerto Rico alone. In addition, the CDC estimates more than 20 percent of Puerto Rico's 3.5 million people will contract Zika this summer and that 50 pregnant Puerto Rican women are infected with the virus every day. With these alarming statistics, it is critical to coordinate a response to protect and educate Puerto Rican citizens, including resources in both English and Spanish.

Given that only 1 in 5 people with the virus experience symptoms, the consequences of the spread of the disease is not always readily visible. However, the consequences are dire, especially for pregnant women and their children. Zika has been clearly linked with microcephaly, a condition where newborns are born with abnormally small heads due to underdevelopment of or damage to the brain. Babies with microcephaly can have a range of severe disabilities, including seizures, developmental delay, speech problems, intellectual disabilities, problems with movement or balance, feeding problems, hearing loss and/or vision problems. Children born with microcephaly and their families will need a broad range of health services and other support, which will be a particular challenge in Puerto Rico, where the health

care system is on the brink of collapse due to the fiscal crisis and chronic underfunding as compared to the U.S. mainland. It is vital that we act now to prevent the spread of Zika as much as possible and to invest in critical resources to develop a vaccine and mitigate the risks presented by mosquitos through vector control.

Despite pleas from Members of Congress and health advocates, little to nothing has been done to tackle Zika, and Puerto Rican women and children will pay the price for the U.S. Congress' shameful inaction and neglect. And juxtaposed with the Republican Party's unwavering commitment to protect life, this "out of sight, out of mind" approach is simply unacceptable for pregnant U.S. citizens and their children living in Puerto Rico, which is a mere 1,150 miles off the coast of Florida. It is my hope that Congress will act swiftly in helping the people of Puerto Rico in their time of need as American citizens, before it is too late. Time is of the essence for Puerto Rico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Luis V. Gutiérrez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress