
CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Dear Senator:

I am writing to express my deep concern about our national and local capacity to prevent and respond to one of the most alarming infectious disease threats on the horizon: the Zika Virus. Congress has so far failed to provide emergency supplemental funding for Zika response. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is now shifting \$44.2 million from state and local base public health emergency preparedness (PHEP) grants to pay for Zika response. Due to the congressionally mandated PHEP formula, cuts to the grants will range from 1 to 10%.

Our PHEP funds are critical for us to effectively respond to local, state and national emergencies. When Baltimore was shaken by unrest in April, PHEP funds allowed us to take a lead role in coordinating a response. Specifically, it allowed us to staff multiple emergency response centers, coordinate emergency mental health services, and arrange prescription delivery to seniors and other vulnerable individuals impacted by the closed pharmacies. Reductions in funds would have stifled our capacity to respond and provide critical emergency services to vulnerable residents. When Baltimore was crippled by nearly 3 feet of snow in the historic storm this February, it was PHEP funds that enabled Baltimore City to be the only jurisdiction in Maryland to ensure life-sustaining dialysis treatment for critical patients.

As you know, the Baltimore City Health Department is on the front-lines of public health emergencies, and we appreciate your support in Washington to ensure that we are able to continue to protect our residents against outbreaks, unrest, and weather emergencies. Though we have taken a lead role in this space, our work will be significantly limited by such drastic cuts. Congress providing emergency supplemental funding for Zika virus prevention would go a long way to ensure that we are prepared as a nation, as a state, and as a city.

As always, thank you for your leadership and advocacy on behalf of the residents of Baltimore and Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leana'.

Leana Wen, M.D., M.Sc.
Commissioner of Health
Baltimore City