

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2016

Dr. Tom Frieden
Director
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Dear Dr. Frieden,

I write to you today to express my concern with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) current backlog of diagnostic tests for the Zika virus.

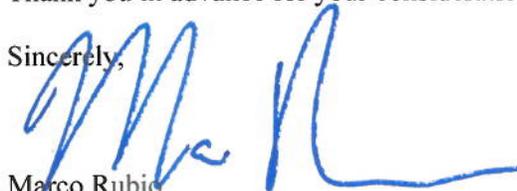
On April 8, I hosted a briefing in Miami, Florida with representatives from state health departments, local health departments and county government officials, infectious disease experts, and health officers from Puerto Rico to learn more about the Zika virus. While I heard many obstacles that we face in fighting Zika, one aspect I heard about repeatedly was the distressing length of time it takes for diagnostic tests to be completed. I have subsequently seen media reports of pregnant women who have waited up to a month for the CDC to complete their diagnostic tests for the Zika virus, while fearful mothers anxiously wait to know their child's fate.

This wait time is unacceptable. As you may know, immediately following the briefing I received, I publicly offered my support for the President's emergency supplemental funding request to combat Zika and urged that the money only be spent directly on this issue. But until Congress approves the request, I urge the CDC to use whatever steps necessary to dedicate currently available resources to clearing its current backlog of Zika diagnostic tests, and to prioritize these tests for women who are pregnant.

These essential steps will help us to not only ease mothers' minds who test negative for the virus, but also to provide critical care for a child whose mother tests positive for the Zika virus. We know that screening for microcephaly should happen early and often, and receiving the results of a diagnostic test is the first step in that process. The CDC should have the capability to provide those services immediately to those who are waiting.

While it is my ultimate hope that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) will approve a commercial Zika diagnostic test in the near future so that these tests are more broadly available, the CDC must take action now to reduce the backlog and to prioritize pregnant women for diagnostic testing. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
United States Senator