September 6, 2016

The Honorable Sylvia Mathews Burwell  
Secretary  
Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Robert M. Califf, MD  
Commissioner  
Food and Drug Administration  
10903 New Hampshire Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Secretary Burwell and Commissioner Califf:

We are writing as the elected representatives of the people of Florida to urge you to assist our state in combating the Zika outbreak. The Federal government must ensure that Florida’s state, county and municipal authorities have access to all tools necessary to successfully manage and end this public health crisis.

Public health officials have linked the spread of the Zika virus to Aedes aegypti, a notoriously hard to control mosquito. In addition to the 500 travel-related cases of the virus in our state, Florida has also begun to manifest locally-transmitted cases of Zika. Clearly, our existing mosquito control measures are not adequate. We must find and utilize new strategies to both curb the spread of the virus and prevent additional outbreaks.

We are asking the Federal government to grant Florida’s state and local governments access to a self-limiting mosquito capable of controlling the Aedes aegypti population. This modified mosquito, developed by the company Oxitec, has proven exceptionally effective. First introduced in 2009, the self-limiting mosquito has been used in the Cayman Islands, Brazil, and Panama, where it reduced the target mosquito population by 90% without harming either the human population or the environment. However, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not given final approval for its use in this country.

It is our understanding that the FDA has been exhaustively reviewing this technology for use on American soil since 2011. It is also our understanding that the FDA, as well as experts from other Federal agencies, have studied this technology and received public comment. On August 5, 2016, the FDA issued a formal Finding of No Significant Impact, thereby validating what we have seen in other countries; that use of the mosquito does not have harmful collateral effects.

If the Federal government follows its normal bureaucratic processes, it might take years for Florida to access this technology. Such a delay presents an unnecessary health risk to the people of our state. Red tape is never an acceptable justification for the loss of human life.
We strongly urge you to declare a public health emergency and grant an Emergency Use Authorization under Section 564 of the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act to make this technology immediately available in any Florida area where Zika is being transmitted or likely to be transmitted. This authority has already been used ten times in Zika cases in order to make diagnostic tests available.

We ask you to stand by the people of Florida in our time of need and use your legal authority to grant us access to a new source of hope in the fight against the spread of this terrible virus. We look forward to your favorable response.

Respectfully,

Representative Larry Ahern,
District 66

Representative Ben Albritton,
District 56

Representative Lori Berman,
District 90

Representative Halsey Beshears,
District 7

Representative Michael Bileca,
District 115

Representative Jim Boyd,
District 71

Representative Jason Brodeur,
District 28

Representative Doug Broxson,
District 3

Representative Danny Burgess,
District 38

Representative Colleen Burton,
District 40

Representative Matt Caldwell,
District 79

Representative Gwyndolen Clarke-Reed, District 92

Representative Neil Combee,
District 39

Representative Richard Corcoran, District 37

Representative Robert Cortes,
District 30
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<td>Shevrin Jones</td>
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Representative Carlos Trujillo, District 105
Representative Jay Trumbull, District 6
Representative Alan Williams, District 8

Representative John Wood, District 41

cc: Jeffrey Zients, Director, National Economic Council
Amy Pope, National Security Council
Susan E. Rice, National Security Advisor