



United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

BILL NELSON
FLORIDA

June 13, 2017

The Honorable Robert M. Speer
Acting Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20310-0101

Dear Acting Secretary Speer:

I am concerned about the possibility that the U.S. Army may grant exclusive license of patents to Sanofi Pasteur, Inc. for a Zika virus vaccine, without addressing the issue of accessibility and affordability. If the Army chooses to move forward with its plan to provide Sanofi Pasteur an exclusive license to sell this vaccine, it must first obtain assurances that the vaccine will be affordable to all who need it.

Providing a single drugmaker exclusive control over a desperately-needed vaccine could create an environment in which the vaccine is unaffordable to those who need it most. A high price tag will burden state governments who cover the costs of vaccines through state Medicaid programs. In states, like mine, that have not expanded Medicaid and where 13 percent of Floridians remain without health insurance, the cost of a vaccine will likely fall to thousands of uninsured individuals.

I have been a vocal proponent for funding to address the Zika virus, including a sustainable funding stream for the development of a vaccine. An effective vaccine against Zika will be a critical tool to stop the spread of Zika. However, in order for the vaccine to be accessible to all Floridians who need it, it must also be affordable.

It is my understanding that this vaccine is largely supported by federal funding, including federally-funded clinical trials, \$43 million to Sanofi to support Phase II clinical trials, and an option for another \$130 million for Phase III trials, if needed.

Given the considerable federal investment and the need for the vaccine, I believe it's critical that the vaccine be available and accessible to the taxpayers who already invested in the research and development of the vaccine.

No state has been harder hit than Florida, with more than 1,400 cases of the Zika virus being reported to date. Until we have a vaccine, the Zika virus will continue to threaten families and babies in Florida and across the nation. I urge you to consider the impact that an exclusive license could have on the affordability of the Zika vaccine. Failure to limit the vaccine's market price could make it inaccessible to thousands of Floridians who need it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Nelson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.