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- ABOUT GOVERNOR HASSAN
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Press Release

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Governor Hassan, State Officials Taking Preemptive Action Regarding the Zika Virus

Department of Health and Human Services Launches Zika Website

CONCORD - In order to protect the health of New Hampshire citizens, Governor Maggie Hassan and public health and emergency management officials are taking steps to prepare for the Zika virus. While the virus outbreak has thus far been localized in Southern and Central America, there is no immediate threat to New Hampshire residents, and while the disease is not considered life-threatening, it has been linked to birth defects if contracted by pregnant women. The Governor and state officials are working with federal partners to take action to enhance education and preparedness.

State public health officials are working with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to enhance the state Public Health Laboratories testing capabilities, protocols and certifications for Zika and coordinating with medical providers and infectious disease clinicians across the state. The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has also launched a Zika website for public access to resources and information about the virus.

"Protecting the health and safety of our citizens in the event of a public health emergency is one of state government's most important responsibilities, and it requires effective coordination between the state, local and federal governments and health care providers," Governor Hassan said. "Because New Hampshire does not currently have the kind of mosquitoes that can transmit the Zika virus, we are not at risk of an outbreak, but we must ensure that we are prepared to assist those who might become infected elsewhere and we must continue improving education and awareness efforts for both clinicians and the general public."

Because there are currently not any treatments or vaccines for Zika, prevention efforts are focused on preventing mosquito bites. This includes avoiding travel to affected areas, using repellents containing DEET, and wearing long sleeves and pants.

"We encourage people to be aware of the travel advisories issued by the CDC and consult their healthcare providers before and after any travel to affected tropical areas, especially if the person traveling is pregnant or attempting to become pregnant," said State Epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan. "There is no risk of contracting the Zika virus in New Hampshire and we will continue to monitor the situation nationally and globally in order to keep residents and healthcare providers informed."

The DHHS Zika website is available at: <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/zika>.

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