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The Senate of the State of Texas  
**Jane Nelson**  
Senate District 12

Committees:

FINANCE, CHAIR  
TRANSITION LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT  
COMMITTEE, CO-CHAIR  
LEGISLATIVE AUDIT COMMITTEE  
LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD  
STATE AFFAIRS  
PARTNERSHIP ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
JOINT COMMITTEE TO STUDY TRS  
HEALTH BENEFIT PLANS

June 22, 2016

Commissioner Charles Smith  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
Brown-Heatly Building  
4900 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78751-2316

Dear Commissioner Smith:

As the State of Texas conducts our Zika preparations, I am writing to encourage the Health and Human Services Commission and Department of State Health Services to integrate our women's health network into the state response plan.

Because of the particular risks Zika poses to pregnant women, it is vital that our women's health providers be included in efforts to prevent the spread of this virus among women who are or could become pregnant. I understand the Department of State Health Services is monitoring the number of pregnant women with Zika in the state, working with laboratories to expand testing capacity, and establishing baseline data of known complications. These efforts are important, but we should also maximize the ability of our thousands of women's health providers – who work directly with the population at the highest risk of serious complications -- to protect Texas women. Please let me know what steps are being taken to promote collaboration between local health departments and other providers and to educate clients in our women's health programs about how they can protect themselves from Zika. I would also like to better understand how the additional \$50 million for women's health programs appropriated in the last legislative session is bolstering family planning at a time when these services are so critically needed.

Please know how much I appreciate your service to our state. I look forward to working with you on our state's preparations to protect against Zika.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jane Nelson".

Senator Jane Nelson

Cc:

Governor Greg Abbott

Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick

Speaker of the House Joe Straus

Senator Charles Schwertner, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee

Representative Myra Crowover, Chair, Public Health Committee

Representative Richard Raymond, Chair, Human Services Committee

Commissioner John Hellerstedt, Department of State Health Services

Deputy Executive Commissioner Gary Jessee, Health and Human Services Commission

Associate Commissioner Lesley French, Health and Human Services Commission