

\$50 million in federal funds is at risk ^[1]

Submitted on 29 June 2017 - 2:33pm

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El Nuevo Día ^[2]

Original Source:

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By:



About \$ 50 million in federal funds to combat diseases transmitted by the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*, such as zika and dengue, are at risk if the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust ^[3](Trust) loses its status as an independent entity, denounced two sources to El New day.

This concern responds to the fact that the Trust won a five-year, \$ 65 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ^[4] (CDC) in 2016 "based on the premise that the Trust is An independent entity, "said one of the sources.

The sources, which are part of the scientific community, fear that, if House Bill 1122 becomes law, the CDC reconsiders the remainder of the allocation. This responds, they said, to the CDC expressly seeking a non-profit, non-governmental entity to develop the Vector Control Unit (VCU), which the Trust created in September 2016.

If Bill 1122 became law, executive director Lucy Crespo and the director of Operations Ivan Rios Mena would be dismissed, and a new board of trustees appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate would be created. The new managers would have to be "of the trust" of the syndics, according to the text of the measure. By changing staggeredly every three years, that "trust" would also be changing.

"This moves the Trust away from the entity desired by the CDC to create the vector unit. That is at stake," the source said.

In fact, when the CDC chose the Trust for its "grant", there were criticisms from the medical community because they were not assigned to the Department of Health, during the full Zika epidemic on the island.

At that time, Crespo explained that the CDC "chose the Trust as host of the project, given that it is a private nonprofit entity with the agility that requires responding to a crisis like this."

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