

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 28, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
330 C Street SW Washington, DC 20416

Dr. Rochelle Walensky
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Secretary Becerra and Dr. Walensky:

We write to express our serious concern regarding limited access to monkeypox testing and vaccines amid the rapidly increasing cases of monkeypox across the country, especially due to the heightened risk of exposure to this virus among members of the LGBTQ community and men who have sex with men (MSM)¹.

Since May 13, more than 4,000 cases of monkeypox have been reported globally, including 200 cases in the United States.² Concerningly, New York City alone has reported more than 30 cases of the monkeypox virus as of June 24. However, despite this data, several reports have indicated that community transmission of this virus is occurring largely undetected, demonstrating the urgent need to bolster testing capacity and vaccine supplies. Without increased access to tests, it is impossible to assess the actual prevalence of this disease, which increases the likelihood of continued transmission into vulnerable populations, including people that are immunocompromised, pregnant women, and children.

We are pleased that last week, New York City became the first U.S. jurisdiction to expand access to monkeypox vaccines beyond close contact with people infected. Concerningly, however, the limited supplies of vaccines forced New York City's Chelsea Sexual Health Clinic to turn away hundreds of residents seeking treatment hours after announcing vaccine appointment openings.

While we commend the administration's recent actions to address this outbreak, including authorization of commercial laboratories to expand testing for monkeypox and commitment to securing additional vaccine supplies, we are concerned that our nation's federal response efforts to reduce the spread of this virus, including distribution of updated educational materials about the virus and steps to ramp up testing and vaccine capacity, alarmingly lagged behind those of other countries experiencing similar surges in monkeypox cases. In the weeks and months ahead, these

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/std/treatment-guidelines/msm.htm#:~:text=MSM%20comprise%20a%20diverse%20group,still%20be%20classified%20as%20MSM>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/index.html>

actions must be carried out urgently, efficiently, and transparently to ensure that MSM and others at risk of exposure can access vital protection against this virus.

To that end, we are requesting that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regularly and publicly provide up-to-date information reflecting anticipated dates of availability and quantities of monkeypox tests and vaccine allotments to ensure that state and local health departments can relay timely, accurate information about treatment capacities to residents. This information is key to helping direct individuals to local treatment centers and ensuring that health and government officials remain accurately aware of the status and risk of the monkeypox virus across the country.

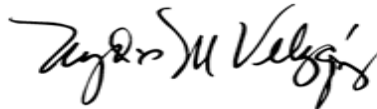
At this critical moment, we cannot risk making the same mistakes that caused the United States to fall behind in testing capacity during the initial COVID-19 outbreak. We urge HHS and CDC—in coordination with state and local health departments—to do everything in their power to drastically scale up monkeypox testing capacity and take additional steps to secure additional monkeypox vaccine supplies to protect the growing number of individuals across the country who have been recently exposed to monkeypox and to protect all high-risk individuals against this virus proactively.

If we do not take aggressive action now, this virus will prove significantly more difficult to eradicate in the months ahead. Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress