



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Letter to CDC on Monkeypox

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL July 14, 2022

| ISSUE: **MONKEYPOX, LGBTQ**

Dr. Rochelle Walensky

Director U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Road Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Walensky:

We, the undersigned New York State legislators, are writing with serious concern regarding the alarming spread of monkeypox. We are deeply worried about the severe shortage of vaccines and limited access to monkeypox testing and treatment through the antiviral drug tecovirimat (TPOXX) while the number of reported cases is increasing across the country, especially in New York.

According to the New York State Department of Health, as of July 12, 2022, New York State had recorded more than 34% of all cases nationally with 359 total cases across the State with 336 cases in New York City. Yet New York has received only 14% of the 144,000 vaccine doses allocated as of the writing of this letter. We were heartened to learn today that nearly 800,000 doses are now scheduled to arrive later this month, but we urge you to equitably distribute these doses so that New York receives assistance according to its need.

Sadly, the monkeypox virus is already rapidly spreading throughout our communities, and the vaccines will arrive too late for many. Therefore, we call on you work with other federal agencies to cut as much red tape as possible to speed the prescription and distribution of antiviral medications like TPOXX that can effectively treat the virus, but currently require significant paperwork and regulatory hurdles to prescribe.

We have learned a great deal in our ongoing battle against COVID-19 and some of those lessons included the importance of easily accessible testing in communities that are historically disproportionately impacted by public health issues as well as the need to intervene in culturally sensitive ways. Although monkeypox can infect anyone, the current outbreak disproportionately affects the LGBTQI community, particularly men who have sex with men. With one of the largest populations of LGBTQI people in the nation, New York has a greater number of at-risk people. While no other demographics are currently at high risk, we want to ensure that remains the case and therefore urge more swift action rooted in practice experience from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We also urge you to use an equity-based lens in the ongoing response to this virus. Please provide regular communications on monkeypox in languages other than English as it is not the primary language spoken by many of our constituents. We encourage you to ongoingly use trans-inclusive and sensitive language. Finally, we insist that additional facilities opened by the federal government or in conjunction with our local and state departments of health consider geographic diversity so that historically neglected communities, including communities of color, immigrant communities, upstate communities, and low-income communities are not excluded from this response. We recognize that the federal government is managing several public health crises at once and are ready to support you at the local level in your management of this. We look forward to your immediate attention to this issue of vital importance to New Yorkers. Time is of the essence and they need your swift and

wholehearted leadership.

Sincerely,

Brad Hoylman, State Senator, 27th District

Jessica González-Rojas, Member of Assembly, 34th District

...and 46 fellow New York State legislators