



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas and State Senator Gustavo Rivera Call for Actions That Center Equity in the State's Monkeypox Response

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August 8, 2022

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NEW YORK, NY – Today, State Senate Health Committee Chair Gustavo Rivera (D-Bronx) and Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas (D-Queens) who sits on the Assembly Health Committee sent a letter to Governor Kathy Hochul with recommendations on additional steps that can be taken to respond to monkeypox.

The legislators noted that the recommendations outlined in the letter were sent with the hope that the state centers on equity in its approach to managing the public health crisis. The letter was sent amid a rise in monkeypox cases that has surpassed 1600 in New York State and as it continues to be the state with the majority of cases in the nation.

In the letter, the legislators requested that the state do what it can to ensure that testing, vaccines, and treatment, or TPOXX be made available to New Yorkers free of charge. They noted that this was particularly important given the many weeks an incubation period and isolation period could require of someone who has come into contact with monkeypox. The lawmakers also noted that a funding pot by the state, known as Article 6 funding, which allows counties to respond to public health emergencies had been changed by former Governor Cuomo so that the state's reimbursement to New York City was 20% instead of 36% which all other counties receive. They asked that this be reverted back to the original 36% and that the change had cost New York City millions in funding that could have helped them better respond to the outbreak. Senator Rivera and Assemblymember González-Rojas also urged the state to make demographic data regarding who is being vaccinated available as well.

"We're urging the Governor to act now within the emergency declaration to eliminate financial burdens to New Yorkers seeking testing and care for the monkeypox virus. It is unconscionable that our public health response would be hindered by New Yorkers' fears of the high cost of healthcare. We also know from the COVID-19 pandemic that a lack of transparency around who is accessing a limited supply of vaccines can have detrimental consequences," said State Senator Gustavo Rivera of the Bronx, Chair of the Senate Health Committee. "I am proud to work with Assembly Member Jessica Gonzalez Rojas to demand guaranteed healthcare during the monkeypox outbreak and in our efforts to make New York a leader in transforming our healthcare system to serve patients, not profits."

"The COVID-19 pandemic taught us several lessons about the inequities of our healthcare system but now we must apply the lessons learned to our response to monkeypox. One of those lessons was that supply without the ability to access testing, treatment, and vaccines means communities of color and working class, and poor people will bear the greatest burden of this crisis. That is why I'm joining with Senator Gustavo Rivera to call for us to lift all possible financial barriers that can exist with accessing these resources and for our state to publish data on who is

getting vaccinated so that no one is left behind,” said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas (D-Queens), a member of the Assembly Health Committee. “This is also a time to reassess Article funding provided to New York City so that as we prepare to respond to future public health crises our city has the resources necessary to do so.