



August 3, 2022

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

We have greatly appreciated the speedy response of your administration in managing the monkeypox outbreak, which has disproportionately impacted New Yorkers across the state and in New York City. Your announcement of a state disaster emergency is commendable and a decisive step in the right direction. We are writing to urge you to take additional action that we believe can also help contain the virus.

According to the New York State Department of Health, as of August 3, 2022, New York State had recorded 1,617 total cases across the State and there were 1,558 cases in New York City. The number of cases has climbed, and it means that we must take all necessary measures to ensure that testing, vaccines, and treatment are as accessible as possible to New Yorkers.

We recommend that the state take appropriate steps to eliminate all potential financial burdens associated with monkeypox, including any testing, vaccination, or treatment such as tecovirimat or TPOXX, and ensure they are free of charge. New Yorkers who test positive may need to be out of work for weeks and we should do whatever we can to reduce the financial burden on them. The expansion of testing is an empirically proven necessary step for us to contain the virus outbreak. Access to treatment is important given the many uncomfortable and painful symptoms that accompany contracting the virus including flu-like symptoms and swelling of the lymph nodes, and a rash on the face and body.

We also believe that this is the opportune time to address a Cuomo-era cut in funding to New York City, known as Article 6 funding. This particular funding supports local municipal public health activities including emergency preparedness and communicable disease control. While other counties are reimbursed for these

expenditures at 36%, only New York City is limited to getting reimbursement at 20% In 2019 this led to a loss of \$62 million to New York City, which would have supported a more rapid response in our city. Now that the state disaster emergency has been declared, you have the authority to and should modify this statutory limitation and draw down available emergency funding to support the increase.

We will continue to support your call for an increased supply of vaccines given that we have the majority of cases in the nation. Please know there has also been outreach by the State Legislature to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services to support increasing access to TPOXX and ACAM2000 through an Emergency Use Authorization. The final issue we would urge action on is directing local departments of health to publish demographic data on who is receiving the vaccine as we want to ensure that communities of color, low-income communities, immigrant communities, and other vulnerable populations do equitably receive the vaccine. To apply lessons that we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and to address this outbreak from a lens of equity, we believe that these steps are crucial and remain ready to support you in implementing these steps.

Thank you for your attention to this and for your ongoing leadership in addressing this public health crisis. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jessica González-Rojas
Member of Assembly, 34th District



Gustavo Rivera
State Senator, 33rd District