



Tuesday, July 12, 2022

The Honorable Xavier Becerra
Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Director
U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Re: Calling for a more equitable distribution of the JYNNEOS™ vaccine to New York City

Dear Secretary Becerra and Dr. Walensky:

The undersigned community-based organizations (CBOs), that provide health and psychosocial support services to the LGBTQIA+ communities in New York City (NYC), write to share our deep concern about the disproportional distribution of the JYNNEOS™ vaccine to fight the monkeypox outbreak. Once again, NYC—and its gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men residents—are at the epicenter of an outbreak of a virus that we fear will become endemic absent timely and effective intervention by our public health agencies at all levels of government.

According to the best available data:

- As of July 11, of the 865 confirmed infections of monkeypox in the U.S., 223 (25.8%) are in NYC, the highest proportion of any state/city. And that number is likely an undercount;
- Despite bearing the disproportionate burden of 25.8% of the known monkeypox infections in the nation, NYC was allocated less than 11% of the 56,000 doses of JYNNEOS™ already made available nationwide. And we have been notified that NYC will be receiving only 10.2% (14,652) of the 144,000 vaccine doses that will be distributed the week of July 10.

As CBOs with a long history of serving LGBTQIA+ communities in NYC, we are wholly committed to supporting and working with the CDC and the New York State and NYC Departments of Health, applying lessons learned from HIV over the past 40 years, as well as the COVID-19 response. It is imperative to implement a strategy based on an equity framework that prioritizes the most vulnerable communities, guarantees access to evidence-based information free of stigma, increases awareness and education for our communities, and that embraces a language justice commitment.

We respectfully urge the CDC to:

- Re-evaluate the formula used to determine the distribution of JYNNEOS™ so that states and localities receive an allocation proportional to their number of monkeypox infections;
- Improve distribution mechanisms to make vaccine doses available more expediently;
- Partner more closely with CBOs in the creation and distribution of educational materials online and in-person in the forums and venues most frequented by the gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men who are currently at greatest risk of new infection. This should include funding to support paid social media campaigns, the printing and distribution of hard copy materials, and the subcontracting of trusted community ambassadors to share this information, such as party promoters, DJs, and drag performers and other entertainers.

We thank you for partnering with us and other CBOs to fight the monkeypox outbreak and to ensure these efforts are proportional to the known infections in our diverse communities.

Sincerely,

(In alphabetical order)

Apicha Community Health Center

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center

Harlem United

GMHC

Latino Commission on AIDS

Translatinx Network