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One Hundred Seventeenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

August 1, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Secretary Mayorkas:

Given the increased incidence of monkeypox cases in the United States, we are writing to request more information on the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) actions, with its Federal, state, and local partners, in the face of this public health emergency.

On July 23, 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) deemed monkeypox a "public health emergency of international concern."[1] President Biden is reportedly planning to announce a public health emergency in response to the outbreak.[2] According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as of July 27, there are 20,638 reported cases of monkeypox worldwide, and 4,639 cases in the U.S.[3] Experts fear reported cases are a fraction of the total cases.[4] The virus is taking a disproportionate toll on the LGBTQ community, which has historically faced discrimination within the health system.[5] Cases have also been reported in pregnant women and children; both groups are especially high risk.[6] Experts have critiqued delays in the Federal government's response, including the lack of availability of vaccinations and testing, which may have permitted the outbreak to grow.[7]

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[1] Lindsey Dawson "Key Questions About the Current U.S. Monkeypox Outbreak," Kaiser Family Foundation, July 28, 2022, https://www.kff.org/other/issue-brief/key-questions-about-the-current-u-s-monkeypox-outbreak/

[2] Erin Banco and Adam Cancryn, Biden administration expected to soon declare monkeypox a health emergency, Politico, July 27, 2022, https://www.politico.com/news/2022/07/27/biden-admin-monkeypox-health-emergency-00048333

[3] *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, *2022 Monkeypox Outbreak Global Map*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 28, 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/world-map.html; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 2022 U.S. Map & Case Count*," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 28, 2022, https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/us-map.html

[4] *Supra,* Dawson.

[5] *Supra,* Dawson.

[6] Ed Browne, *Fauci Says Monkeypox Poses 'Profound Risk' to Children and Pregnant Women, July 27, 2022,*https://www.newsweek.com/fauci-monkeypox-risk-pregnant-women-children-cases-vaccine-1728257

[7] *Supra,* Dawson.

On May 17, 2022, DHS' National Biosurveillance Integration Center (NBIC) reported on the outbreak.[8] NBIC has been monitoring Nigerian monkeypox and discussing and conferring with interagency partners since June 2021.[9] In July 2022, the DHS Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) published the *Master Question List for Monkeypox Virus*, which is a tool for decision-makers on the local, state and Federal level about the operational response to monkeypox.[10] It is our understanding that the newly established Office of Health Security (OHS) provided technical assistance for this guidance, as well as communicating with interagency partners and DHS components.[11] Given DHS' role in responding to the COVID pandemic, the Committee is interested in the implications for the Department as the outbreak grows.

Please respond to the following questions by August 15, 2022:

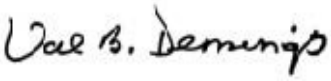
1. Given the increased focus on health preparedness since the COVID pandemic and the fact that NBIC and others were monitoring monkeypox since at least last year, what preparations had DHS made to support monkeypox response alongside its partners?
2. What is the scope of DHS' responsibilities and involvement in the Federal monkeypox response?
3. How is DHS engaging with state, local and Federal partners to address the outbreak?
4. How is the Department applying lessons learned form the COVID pandemic to the monkeypox response?
5. Does DHS have adequate resources to fulfill its monkeypox response responsibilities?

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman

RITCHIE TORRES
Vice Chairman



VAL BUTLER DEMINGS
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

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[8] National Biosurveillance Integration Center (NBIC) Monitoring List, May 17, 2022.
[9] Email correspondence with CHS Staff.
[10] DHS Science and Technology Directorate, *Master Question List for Monkeypox Virus (MPXV),* July 2022, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/22_0712_st_monkeypox_mql.pdf
[11] Email correspondence with CHS Staff.