



## State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
PO BOX 001  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0001

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

July 27, 2022

Secretary Xavier Becerra, JD  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH  
Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329 USA

Dear Secretary Becerra and Director Walensky:

Throughout our shared histories and especially over the last two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) has enjoyed productive and collaborative relationships with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We have all worked to protect the health of New Jersey's many residents and visitors. Our continued collaboration is essential to the protection and improvement of population health in New Jersey, as well as in communities across the U.S. and around the globe where New Jerseyans visit for business or pleasure. With that in mind, today I write to you requesting that you reconsider your current vaccine allocation strategy for monkeypox and deliver an increased supply of vaccine to New Jersey.

New Jersey is a state of over 9.2 million residents with significant population density around the New York metropolitan area, Greater Philadelphia area, and central New Jersey shore area.<sup>1</sup> At the time of this writing, New York has the highest number of monkeypox cases per state in the U.S. One of our learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing the concept that public health has no borders, was that New Jersey's disease burden often follows the trajectory of New York's. There is significant interstate travel between our states; many residents of New Jersey and New York cross our shared border as they work, socialize, visit family members, and travel for pleasure. In regard to transmission of communicable diseases, recent history indicates that as goes New York, so goes New Jersey.

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<sup>1</sup> Census Bureau, State Profiles, New Jersey: 2020 Census (<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/new-jersey-population-change-between-census-decade.html>); <https://www.nj.com/news/2019/01/3d-maps-show-parts-of-nj-are-the-most-densely-populated-on-the-planet.html>

Further, it is likely that populations in our state currently at higher risk of exposure to monkeypox may reside in close proximity to New York state. As the CDC has indicated, while anyone can catch monkeypox if they have close contact with someone who has monkeypox, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, many of those affected in the current global outbreaks are gay, bisexual, or other men who have sex with men.<sup>2</sup> With that in mind, it is important to note that the New York metro area (New York-Newark-Jersey City) has the highest population of LGBTQ adults of any metro area in the United States.<sup>3</sup> Some data indicates that the areas of our state in which the highest concentrations of same-sex households reside overlap significantly with our greatest areas of population density.<sup>4</sup> It is our mission to take every step possible to protect population health for at risk individuals when public health threats emerge. While current allocation strategy provides 25% weight to the estimated size of the underlying population in a jurisdiction who might benefit from expanded vaccination at this point in the outbreak, there is not a consideration for proximity to current caseload.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, while acknowledging that we have limited data on LGBTQ individuals in New Jersey, we feel that this should be considered as a factor in decision-making as vaccines for preventing monkeypox infection are allocated by HHS.<sup>6</sup>

New Jersey makes up nearly 3% of the U.S. population and NJDOH estimates that therefore, due to our population, density, and proximity to New York, we can expect to comprise at least 3% of the disease burden. The revised Phase 2b vaccine allocation strategy only allocated about 2.06% of doses to New Jersey of the available 131,000 doses. Therefore, we do not believe that New Jersey has received an equitable percentage of available vaccine through this allocation strategy. I would like to request that HHS and the CDC reconsider the allocation strategy and increase New Jersey's vaccine allocation to account for our population size and considerations raised in this letter.

We look forward to your response and continued partnership.

Sincerely,



Philip D. Murphy  
Governor



Judith M. Persichilli  
Commissioner  
NJ Department of Health

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<sup>2</sup> CDC Monkeypox Weekly Key Messages, July 14, 2022.

<sup>3</sup> <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgbt-us-msa/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2017/03/29/same-sex-partner-gay-lesbian-lgbt-census-bureau/99786120/>

<sup>5</sup> CDC One-Pager on Jurisdictional Phase 2B Allocation Plan dated July 15, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nj.com/data/2020/02/the-government-doesnt-know-much-about-lgbtq-people-heres-what-we-know-about-nj.html>