

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 8, 2022

The Honorable Charlie Baker
Governor of Massachusetts
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St.
Office of the Governor, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

CC: MA Department of Public Health

Dear Governor Baker,

To confront the ongoing monkeypox virus (MPV) outbreak, we urge you to immediately declare a public health emergency in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. President Biden and Secretary Becerra of the Department of Health and Human Services have already declared a national public health emergency.¹ By doing so at the state level, you will unlock resources to ensure that residents receive the urgent and robust response the moment demands.

MPV is a significant threat to the health of our communities. All people can be infected. Young children are getting MPV.² Current case counts underscore the need to quickly test, vaccinate, and treat high-risk communities, collect, and disclose demographic data, and embark on a multilingual and destigmatizing public education campaign.

The disease causes fever, chills, exhaustion, a rash, and often painful skin lesions. Currently, people with MPV are directed to isolate until they recover, which can lead to missed work and financial strain, mental health complications, and other issues. MPV is easily spread through skin-to-skin contact and there is significant potential for people to contract the disease.³

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 31,800 confirmed cases of MPV across the globe and more than 9,492 confirmed cases in the United States.⁴ The national outbreak is present in almost every state, and Massachusetts continues to have one of the highest case rates, with 174 known cases after 42 people contracted the virus in a single week.⁵ Public health experts, including Dr.

¹ Biden-Harris Administration Bolsters Monkeypox Response; HHS Secretary Becerra Declares Public Health Emergency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (August 4, 2022), <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2022/08/04/biden-harris-administration-bolsters-monkeypox-response-hhs-secretary-becerra-declares-public-health-emergency.html>.

² ‘We will see more kids with this virus’: Boston Children’s doctor urges awareness as monkeypox continues to spread, Boston.com (August 2, 2022), <https://www.boston.com/news/health/2022/08/02/boston-childrens-doctor-kids-risk-monkeypox/>.

³ How it Spreads, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (July 29, 2022), <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/transmission.html>.

⁴ 2022 Monkeypox Outbreak Global Map, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (August 10, 2022), <https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/response/2022/world-map.html>.

⁵ Massachusetts public health officials confirm 42 new monkeypox cases, Commonwealth of Massachusetts (August 4, 2022), <https://www.mass.gov/news/massachusetts-public-health-officials-confirm-42-new-monkeypox-cases>.

Anthony Fauci of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, caution that these numbers are very likely an undercount and only represent the tip of the iceberg.⁶

By declaring a public health emergency, you will have greater flexibility and more tools to enact a whole-of-government response. There are more than 26,000 vaccines allocated to the Commonwealth, and it is important that you act quickly to prevent the MPV outbreak from escalating, including augmenting health care staff, expediting testing and vaccinations, and informing people on how to reduce their risk of infection.

As a Commonwealth, we need to develop and execute a statewide plan, in partnership with experts and local leaders, that is comprehensive, equitable, and transparent. The response to the coronavirus pandemic proved that delayed decision making will only exacerbate the outbreak and threaten the health of the public. Hence, we urge you to demonstrate bold leadership and swift action by recognizing MPV as the public health emergency it is.

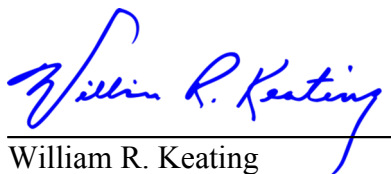
Sincerely,



Seth Moulton
Member of Congress



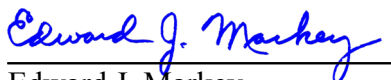
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

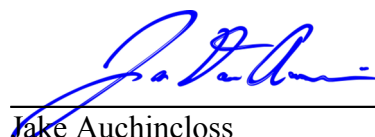


James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

⁶ As Fauci warns monkeypox needs to be taken more seriously, former FDA commissioner says the window to control it 'probably has closed', CNN (July 18, 2022) <https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/17/health/monkeypox-cases-undercounted-fauci/index.html>.



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