



Dear Members of Congress Representing the Appalachian Region:

On behalf of our organizations, the undersigned members request that you take action to combat Monkeypox (MPV) as a national priority. Specifically, we request that you allocate \$4.5 billion to combat Monkeypox, and ensure that rural communities are not left out in our national response. This money is instrumental in providing states with the appropriate resources to continue protecting its community.

This funding is particularly important for those living in rural Appalachia. The Appalachian regions of the United States includes 423 counties that span across 13 states including parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and all of West Virginia. This broad region of approximately 26 million people has persevered through the COVID-19 pandemic, overcoming economic downfall, limited resources and funding, and decreased quality of life. However, Appalachia still experienced immeasurable losses to its community due to the lack of public health infrastructure. It is therefore important to ensure that the communities recovering from past mistakes in the COVID-19 pandemic do not suffer these same fates with the current outbreak of Monkeypox and future diseases. Although cases may be decreasing in our large urban centers, this is not the case for Appalachian states- many of which are seeing an increase. Without targeted resources in the region, we may only repeat the mistakes of the HIV fight, where urban cities stem the tide, leaving rural communities to flounder.

There is desperate need for strong public health infrastructure throughout the US but particularly in the under resourced areas in Appalachia. While states have suffered through the worsts of the COVID-19 pandemic and struggle to manage current Monkeypox outbreaks, public health crises will not end here. New York has just declared a state emergency disaster after the appearance of polio in wastewater in 5 counties. The fear of new and old diseases devastating communities persists as states struggle with limited funding, staff, and resources. We need to ensure states have the appropriate resources to handle any public health events rather than wait for the next one to occur. This funding is not only crucial for vaccine allocation but can be utilized for important health education campaigns that work to fight the stigma associated with Monkeypox. The proposed federal funding allocation of \$4.5 includes \$3.9 billion to combat Monkeypox domestically and \$600 million for international efforts. Given the nature of disease spread, we must include an international response to effectively control the spread of Monkeypox and protect both rural and urban communities in the United States.

Vaccine distribution continues to be a significant challenge for the Appalachian region. It's critical that the federal government expedite vaccine production so that we can sufficiently provide vaccinations across the Appalachian region and across the country. Additionally, we request that

you pass legislation that would ensure that individuals experience no out-of-pocket costs for Monkeypox testing. Economic barriers reduce testing and can lead to increased transmissions.

We ask you to not overlook the rural counties that are often forgotten in public health emergencies. We sincerely urge you to allocate \$4.5 billion so that states and the Appalachia region can combat Monkeypox and future health crises, along with passing reforms to increase access to testing and vaccines. Though our region faces unique challenges, we deserve the same resources to ensure the health and safety of our communities.

For additional information, please reach out to director of regional and national policy at Community Education Group Lee Storrow at lstorrow@communityeducationgroup.org.

Community Education Group
National Rural Health Association
National Coalition of STD Directors

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| AIDS Alabama | International Association of Providers of AIDS Care |
| American Academy of HIV Medicine Georgia Chapter | Kentucky Rural Health Association |
| American Academy of HIV Medicine Great Lakes Chapter | Latino Commission on AIDS |
| American Academy of HIV Medicine Mid-Atlantic Chapter | National Alliance of State and Territorial Aids Directors (NASTAD) |
| American Academy of HIV Medicine New York/New Jersey Chapter | North Carolina AIDS Action Network |
| American Academy of HIV Medicine Pennsylvania Chapter | North Carolina Justice Center |
| American Academy of HIV Medicine Southeast Chapter | Pennsylvania Harm Reduction Network |
| Amity Medical Group | Southern AIDS Coalition |
| Association of Public Health Laboratories | Tennessee Health Care Campaign, Inc |
| Covenant House | Tennessee Justice Center- TJC |
| Georgia Equality | THRIVE S.S. Inc. |
| Georgia Interfaith Public Policy Center | Treatment Action Group (TAG) |
| HealthHIV | Triangle Empowerment Center |
| | Virginia Rural Health Association |
| | West Virginians for Affordable Health Care |