

117TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. RES. 1286

Expressing the sentiment of Congress that the Department of Health and Human Services should declare the monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 26, 2022

Mr. TORRES of New York (for himself, Mr. NADLER, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. QUIGLEY, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Mr. EVANS, Ms. BONAMICI, Mr. TONKO, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Ms. JACOBS of California, Ms. MENG, Ms. STRICKLAND, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Ms. BASS, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. SUOZZI, Mr. JONES, and Mr. BOWMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sentiment of Congress that the Department of Health and Human Services should declare the monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency.

Whereas the Secretary of Health and Human Services may, under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d), determine that (1) a disease or disorder presents a public health emergency or (2) a public health emergency, including significant outbreaks of infectious disease or bioterrorist attacks, otherwise exists, which allows the Secretary to take certain discretionary actions in response to an acute threat to public health;

Whereas these actions may include making grants, entering into contracts, conducting and supporting investigations into the cause, treatment, or prevention of the disease or disorder, providing supplies, equipment, and services, and detailing employees of the Department of Health and Human Services to the recipients of awards for carrying out activities funded through their awards;

Whereas the Secretary of Health and Human Services may also use funds appropriated to the Public Health Emergency Fund to immediately respond to the public health emergency or potential public health emergency by facilitating coordination among Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial entities, and public and private health care entities, making awards, supporting advanced research and development and biosurveillance, supporting initial emergency operations related to preparation and deployment of National Disaster Medical System teams, and other actions determined appropriate and applicable by the Secretary, and granting extensions or waiving sanctions relating to submission of data or reports required under authority vested by law in the Secretary, when the Secretary determines that as a result of the public health emergency, individuals or public or private entities are unable to comply with deadlines for such data or reports;

Whereas the World Health Organization has considered the monkeypox virus the most important orthopoxvirus for public health since the eradication of smallpox in 1980;

Whereas, since early May 2022, cases of monkeypox virus have been reported from countries where the disease is not endemic, and most reported cases have been identified thus far through sexual health or other health services largely among the LGBTQ+ community;

Whereas the World Health Organization declared monkeypox a public health emergency of international concern on July 24, 2022, and warned that the virus could spread far beyond the LGBTQ+ community;

Whereas the World Health Organization has designated only two other diseases, COVID–19 and polio, as public health emergencies of international concern;

Whereas the United States has reported approximately 3,000 cases of monkeypox as of July 25, 2022, a rate tenfold higher than case reports only one month prior, which demonstrates a rapidly evolving public health threat, and when there is an infectious disease outbreak, the Federal Government is obligated to make vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics immediately and widely available;

Whereas though the Federal Government had the resources available to curb the spread of monkeypox, including millions of vaccine doses stockpiled, its delays in approving distribution of both tests and vaccines allowed this virus to entrench itself as a rapidly spreading rare disease;

Whereas the monkeypox virus, a highly containable disease, has now spread uncontrollably for two months and become uncontainable, with a clear risk of further national and international spread;

Whereas with the rapid and often underreported spread of infectious diseases like COVID–19 and monkeypox, the Nation’s public health infrastructure has been proven tenuous;

Whereas as the Nation grapples with the radical restructuring of life in the wake of COVID–19, we must now ensure that public health agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention, and the Food and Drug Administration are vigilant in preparing the Nation for a worst case scenario;

Whereas the acute threat monkeypox poses to LGBTQ+ individuals and other vulnerable populations must be treated with the seriousness and urgency it deserves; and

Whereas it is critical that the United States deploy all necessary resources to develop immunity in the population and stop the spread of this disease, which will prevent another catastrophic public health emergency: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) expresses concern about the rapid spread of
3 monkeypox in the United States and across the
4 globe;

5 (2) urges the Department of Health and
6 Human Services to take all possible actions to de-
7 ploy every resource available, including testing, vac-
8 cines, and therapeutics, to aggressively respond to
9 the rapid spread of monkeypox; and

10 (3) recommends that the Secretary of Health
11 and Human Services declare a public health emer-
12 gency for the monkeypox virus.

○