August 7, 2022

Dear Governor Inslee and Secretary Shah:

The undersigned eleven (11) organizations and individual stakeholder are writing to request that Washington State declare the Monkeypox Epidemic a State of Emergency. Pursuant to RCW Section 43.06.220, the State of Emergency will increase the expediency that Washington State healthcare workers, residents and visitors may access Monkeypox vaccine stockpiles; associated medical equipment including personal protective equipment (PPE); and expand the resources available to state and local health departments and their grantees to mitigate Monkeypox. Your support is critical to achieving the goals of the Biden-Harris Administration laid out with the National Public Health Emergency Declaration announced by Secretary Xavier Becerra on August 4, 2022.

In January 2021, President Biden signed an Executive Order (EO 13985) on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government. President Biden has also been fervent supporter for addressing the healthcare needs of LGBTQ+ Americans. The Monkeypox epidemic intersects both of these issues as the virus is primarily not only being identified in gay/bisexual/same gender loving men in addition to transgender/gender nonconforming people but is also being centered in Latinx and Black communities. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the majority of people diagnosed with Monkeypox are BIPOC (Black-Indigenous-People of Color) with 37% identifying as Latinx and 29% as Black compared to 33% identifying as white. Therefore, Blacks and Latinx are the most impacted by scope and scale even though both populations are far underrepresented in Monkeypox vaccine uptake.

We call on the Governor’s Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities to work with LGBTQ+ focused organizations with a particular attention to BIPOC-centered entities to create a community centered Monkeypox Task Force (MTF). The MTF will advise the Washington State Department of Health on the utilization of federal and state funds to ensure a culturally responsive and timely response to communities most impacted by communicable diseases and those who have been historically excluded from preventative and treatment measures, i.e., QTPOC (Queer-Trans- People of Color), unhoused, individuals in the trade sex industry, and/or people who use substances.
In addition to a Governor’s State of Emergency proclamation, we are asking for a virtual meeting with Senior WA DOH leadership and Senior Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities members via video teleconference within seven (7) business days. As time is of the essence to avert a growing epidemic, we highly appreciate your sincere time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Ace Robinson, MHL, MPH | Chief Executive Officer | PCAF (formerly Pierce County AIDS Foundation)
S. Troy Christensen | Executive Director | Rainbow Center
Chace Hunter | Executive Director | AHAT Homecare

PCAF
AHAT Homecare
Federal Way Pride
Gay City: Seattle’s LGBTQ Center
Lavender Rights Project
Oasis Youth Center
POCAAN
Pride at Work
Rainbow Center
Yakima Pride
Vocal-WA
Dr. Joanna Stekler, MD, MPH

cc:
Senator Patty Murray (Chair, Senate HELP Committee)
Senator Maria Cantwell
Congressperson Pramila Jayapal
Congressperson Derek Kilmer
Congressperson Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Congressperson Dan Newhouse
Congressperson Marilyn Strickland
Mayor Janice Deccio
Mayor Bruce Harrell
Mayor Victoria Woodards
Mayor Nadine Woodward