

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Pushes for stronger federal response to Monkeypox Public Health Emergency

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin is urging a more robust federal response to the ongoing Monkeypox Public Health Emergency.

Senator Baldwin joined a group of senators led by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) in a letter to Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY) and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) urging the Senate to include critical funding to address the monkeypox (MPV)/orthopoxvirus Public Health Emergency (PHE) in any forthcoming legislative package in the 117th Congress.

In their letter, the Senators spotlight that the United States public health system remains on the frontlines in identifying MPV cases, informing Americans about access to vaccines and therapeutics, and connecting constituents to necessary medical care and resources. Yet this system continues to be strained by the COVID-19 pandemic and underfunded.

“MPV testing efforts are currently encountering processing and collection barriers that have led to underreporting of cases and poor data to aid the federal government in directing necessary resources in an appropriate manner,” the Senators wrote. **“Additionally, as both a prophylaxis and treatment, acquiring and administering vaccines swiftly is crucial to stemming the spread of MPV and protecting all communities across the United States. Finally, clinics and providers are facing additional barriers**

in clinical services supplies, education for providers to properly identify MPV, vaccines, testing supplies, contact tracing, and community outreach to bolster our public health response to MPV, and ensure that accurate and adequate information is reaching our constituents.”

Senators Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Jack Reed (D-RI), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Bernie Sanders (I-VT) also signed the letter, which can be found [here](#).

As more MPV cases spring up across the country, Senator Baldwin also joined a group of Senators led by U.S. Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) in a letter urging the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Dawn O’Connell to improve MPV awareness and education among the general public and health care providers.

Many providers currently lack familiarity in identifying and treating MPV infections, resulting in some patients seeing multiple health care professionals in order to be tested. This may lead to an increased infection risk for patients and increased spread within their families and providers.

In the letter, the Senators write, **“Our response to COVID-19 highlighted the importance of clear and early communication from public health experts. It’s imperative that we apply this lesson to improve MPV awareness and education among the general public and health care providers.”**

The Senators are also calling on the CDC and HHS to ensure that the general public understands that MPV can spread among any population through direct contact with lesions, use of shared objects, and respiratory secretions in extended periods of close contact. Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Tim Kaine (D-VA), Cory Booker (D-NJ), and Ron Wyden (D-OR) also signed the letter, which can be found [here](#).

These letters come less than a month after Baldwin joined 22 colleagues on a separate letter [sounding the alarm on MPV vaccine access inequities](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).