The Los Angeles LGBT Center has been working tirelessly to respond to the human monkeypox public health crisis that is presently placing the health and safety of our community in jeopardy. We will sustain our efforts to vaccinate, educate, and advocate. As we know from the AIDS crisis, when the LGBTQ+ community is faced with a public health threat, we cannot rely on the government. Instead, we must take swift action.

Since human monkeypox (or hMPXV*) emerged last spring as a threat to gay and bisexual men and transgender people, the Center’s team of medical providers, policy advocates, and outreach workers designed and initiated a community response plan. Our goal: combat stigma and lessen the spread through compassionate care and steadfast advocacy.

* The Center has begun using hMPXV, which is an abbreviation for human monkeypox. This abbreviation is more medically accurate and helps to reduce stigma.

Please allow me to share more about the Los Angeles LGBT Center’s comprehensive community response.
• **Goal One: Test, Treat, and Vaccinate**
  
  o *We have diagnosed 44 cases of monkeypox* to date, which represents nearly 20% of all cases in L.A. County. Each of these patients have been provided compassionate, stigma-free medical care. We continue to screen all our patients who are experiencing symptoms or have a known or possible hMPXV exposure.
  
  o *We vaccinated nearly 1,600 eligible patients,* helping to prevent these patients from acquiring hMPXV and slowing the spread within our community. Our vaccination efforts have been so successful that we have run out of all the doses allocated to the Center by the County. As soon as we receive more, we will resume vaccinating our 3,000 presently eligible patients and look forward to the federal government providing L.A. County enough doses so that we can vaccinate all our patients.

• **Goal Two: Educate**
  
  o *We set up a dedicated human monkeypox web page,* which is updated on a regular basis for the public to find information about the Center’s action, the virus, the county’s vaccination program, and safety precautions.
  
  o *We helped organize two town halls* in collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and other community partners that have reached hundreds of concerned community members. Recordings from both town halls can be found on the Center’s human monkeypox web page.
  
  o *We served as a trusted source of medically-accurate and stigma-free information to the broader community,* including
coverage by *LA Times*, CNN, NPR and nearly 200 other publications.

- **Goal Three: Advocate**
  - We launched a Human Monkeypox Action Center that allows community members to join the Center in our call for Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra to improve access to hMPXV testing, treatment, and vaccination. Last week, in partnership with four community groups, the Center sent a letter to the CDC demanding more testing and vaccines and changing the name of the virus to stop stigmatization of the community. [Click here](#) and you can add your voice to this important advocacy.
  - We demanded a public health emergency be declared in L.A. County. Following the World Health Organization, San Francisco County, and the state of New York’s declarations, I sent a letter last week to Dr. Barbara Ferrer, director of the County’s Department of Public Health, and the County Board of Supervisors urging them to show the same leadership. Just yesterday, they ratified a emergency declaration.
  - We advocated for government funding. Not a single dollar has been allocated to the Center or any local community-based organization to assist the County with its response. This places a significant financial burden on the Center and other organizations at a time when resources are already limited.

The Center’s work is far from complete, and our response will continue to grow as needed. As we look ahead to August, we know the numbers will
continue to grow. But as noted in my recent Op-Ed, we are at an inflection point and must do everything possible to prevent this outbreak from becoming yet another epidemic that the LGBTQ+ community must bear the burden of.

These continue to be unprecedented times. The stress of responding to yet another health crisis within our community while our human rights as LGBTQ+ people are being threatened is overwhelming for all of us. I would like to believe that during this period of daunting challenges the work of our Center — your Center — to vaccinate, educate, and advocate offers you hope.

I want to assure you that the Center will always be there to provide care and support to our community. I hope you will join and support our community response.

Sincerely,

Joe Hollendonner, MSW
Chief Executive Officer