

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Resolution Designating September as Sickle Cell Awareness Month

09/30/2020

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed a joint resolution (SJR38), which designates September of each year as “Sickle Cell Awareness Month”.

“Sickle cell disease is an inherited condition that affects thousands in our state, predominantly those in our Black community, and those with sickle cell are also particularly vulnerable to COVID-19,” **said Governor Murphy**. “To New Jerseyans who are impacted by sickle cell, especially those who have also been impacted by this pandemic, we stand with you, and we are committed to promoting awareness and fighting this disease.”

“When sickle cell disease strikes, people need support, especially when they require intense treatments and procedures. Raising awareness in our communities for this debilitating genetic disorder that disproportionately affects African Americans is imperative,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. “By designating September as Sickle Cell Awareness Month in New Jersey, we are in turn producing more resources and potentially life-saving awareness for individuals and families who are most affected.”

“As part of the state’s newborn screening program, all infants are screened for genetic diseases, like sickle cell, and families can be connected to health care services and resources,” **said Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. “By increasing public awareness, we can continue to focus efforts on educating parents about this disease.”

“Sickle Cell disease is the most common genetic disease in the United States and primarily effects Black Americans, who often have the most difficult time securing adequate healthcare,” **said Senator Shirley Turner**. “With this designation we will help to raise public awareness and connect more individuals with the treatment they need.”

“Not only does sickle cell disease impact individuals physically, there is also often a financial burden associated with it due to the costly medicine and blood transfusions needed to manage symptoms,” **said Senator Nellie Pou**. “In 2011, New Jersey enacted legislation to require health insurance companies to cover treatment for sickle cell anemia and it is imperative that we continue to show support and care for those who suffer from this condition.”

In a joint-statement, Assemblymembers Annette Quijano and Britnee Timberlake said:

“Designating Sickle Cell Awareness Month in New Jersey will encourage our state to play a more active role in helping members of the public understand exactly what this group of genetic disorders entail. Many people with the genetic trait for sickle cell disease are unaware that they have it. Yet if both a mother and father carry this trait, each of their children will have a 25 percent chance of being born with the disease. With more awareness, more people could get genetic testing that would help them understand and prepare for that”



possibility in advance. This resolution also asks the Governor to encourage public officials to conduct various programs and activities to help promote more widespread knowledge of this disease. The more residents understand the symptoms of sickle cell disease, the more they can seek out the care and treatment they need.”

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