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## Governor Christie: We Cannot Continue To Make Moral Judgments About Addiction

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### Governor Christie: We Cannot Continue To Make Moral Judgmen...

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### Transcript:

**Governor Christie:** When my mother was diagnosed with lung cancer, no one came to us and said don't treat her, she is getting what she deserves. Since 1964, she's been warned that smoking could or would cause lung cancer and she chose every day to open another pack of cigarettes, light them up and smoke them. So really she is getting what she deserves. No one said that to us, in fact the reaction, as many of you I'm sure have experienced yourselves with members of your family or friends, was the exact opposite. People suggesting the best hospitals and doctors for her to go to, sharing their own stories to try to be compassionate to her. To give her hope. We did not see any of the stigma that is attached to an addiction even though my mother's disease was exclusively caused by her own conduct and her own choices and her addiction. But people saw it somehow as different. Why? The fact is that, as it was mentioned earlier, there are lots of factors that come into the issue of drug addiction but we believe now, if my mother was a heroin addict rather than a smoker, would people have reacted the same way? Would we have told people? I had no hesitation in telling people that my mother had been diagnosed with lung cancer. I was seeking help, seeking guidance, seeking comfort. If my mother was a heroin addict would we have said the same thing? If my mother was addicted to opioids would we say the same thing? We wouldn't. We know we wouldn't and we don't. And what's that cause? It causes us not only to have a lack of candor and honesty, which leads to an even greater lack of openness, but also it leads to the person suffering from the disease being unwilling to admit it, to discuss it, to seek treatment and to deal with the issue. They deal with it in the shadows, at best. So the stigma issue has to be fixed and I think only can be fixed by forums like this and people in public life, in all aspects of public life, not just political leadership, talking about the issue. It's extraordinarily important and giving permission to people who are suffering from this disease to admit it

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and to seek help. And for us not to continue to make the moral judgements that we have been making. Now, this is in the context of me being one of the most anti-drug governors in the country. I don't believe in the legalization or decriminalization of marijuana. I don't believe in the legalization of drugs in anyway and I believe in stiff penalties for those who profit from the dealing of drugs. The two are separable and in fact I think need to be for us to be effective. We have to continue to encourage people not to start but recognize that when they do, we have an obligation to encourage them to seek help because this is a disease.

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