

State of New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy

First Lady Tammy Murphy Announces Nurture NJ Campaign, Reinforces New Jersey's Commitment to Maternal and Infant Health

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CAMDEN – In observance of Maternal Health Awareness Day, First Lady Tammy Murphy today launched Nurture NJ, a statewide awareness campaign committed to reducing infant and maternal mortality and morbidity and ensuring equitable maternal and infant care among women and children of all races and ethnicities. The First Lady's announcement was made at Cooper University Health Care in Camden alongside cabinet members of the Murphy Administration and members of the Legislature, who reaffirmed New Jersey's commitment to promoting maternal and infant health.

Nurture NJ, which commits to serving every mother, every baby, and every family, includes a multi-pronged, multi-agency approach to improve maternal and infant health among New Jersey women and children. The campaign will include internal collaboration between departments and agencies; an annual Black Maternal and Infant Health Leadership Summit; the First Lady's Family Festival event series, which targets cities with high rates of Black infant and maternal mortality; a robust social media strategy to inform and raise awareness; and connecting family members involved in taking care of a child with state, county, and local resources to provide care, support, resources, and relief.

"From symposiums across the state, to an incredible \$38 million in federal child care grants, to statewide community-based initiatives dedicated to improving services and access to perinatal care, we have been working every angle of maternal and infant health to make sure that we are a stronger, fairer, and healthier New Jersey," said **First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "I am proud to stand together with our statewide partners and launch Nurture NJ so that we can work collaboratively to improve the health and safety of all New Jersey's women and children, and to eliminate the abhorrent disparity for women and infants of color."

"Maternal Health Awareness Day is the time for our partners to pledge to advance health care quality for all mothers and babies in our state and the First Lady's Nurture NJ campaign does just that," said **New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal**. "The Department of Health will continue this work to implement a strategic plan to ensure all mothers have an equal chance at a healthy birth and a healthy baby."

"The Department of Human Services shares the First Lady's commitment to improving maternal and infant health and to combatting the unacceptable disparity in maternal and birth outcomes for African-American women and infants," said **New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson**. "At Human Services, we will continue to take steps to address systemic problems that can adversely affect maternal and infant health. Over the past year, we've added Medicaid coverage of postpartum long-acting reversible contraception to increase women's family planning choices, expanded Medicaid coverage of tobacco cessation and diabetes prevention to decrease risk factors for low-birthweight infants and improve women's health, and invested in expanding access to affordable child care to help families succeed. Eliminating disparities in maternal health includes making sure women have access to the health and social services they need to live healthy lives."

"We are encouraged by the work that's already been done around maternal health by the Murphy Administration, but we know that we're just getting started," said **New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer**. "We look forward to continuing our partnership with First Lady Tammy Murphy and our partners in state government to make New Jersey a national leader in the area of maternal and infant health, and to ensure that all families have access to the services, supports and resources they need to be safe, healthy and connected."

"The First Lady's dedication to improving maternal health and birth outcomes, especially for at-risk populations, is inspiring," said **State Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Muoio**. "Treasury is committed to being an active partner in this endeavor and will work to identify ways in which our state-administered health benefits programs might be able to better serve expectant mothers and their newborn children and reduce infant mortality."

"Despite being the richest and most powerful nation in the world, we continue to struggle with ensuring our mothers and infants have an equal shot at a healthy life. That's a tremendous problem, particularly in New Jersey, and I am grateful for the First Lady's work on this issue," said **Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-NJ)**, who introduced the Healthy MOM Act, federal legislation aimed at addressing maternal mortality by allowing pregnant women to enroll in or change their health insurance plans when they discover they are expecting. "The disparities in access, treatment and outcomes that plague maternal and infant mortality and so often result in tragedy for women of color are hurdles that we can overcome. Nurture NJ will help us do it."

"The increase in maternal mortality rates is a tragedy for the families who have suffered the heartbreaking loss of loved ones. This is a public health crisis for the country and New Jersey," said **Senator Joe Vitale, chairman of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee**. "Too many women have died during and after childbirth because of preventable and treatable conditions. The rate of pregnancy-related deaths more than doubled nationally from 1987 to 2014. New Jersey ranks 47th among the states with a mortality rate of more than 37 deaths per every 100,000 live births. This is unacceptable and inexcusable for a country and a state with the most advanced health care and medical services in the world. I applaud First Lady Tammy Murphy and the Murphy Administration for acting to address this crisis at the same time the Legislature is moving forward with a comprehensive package of bills. These pieces of legislation will help save the lives of mothers and their newborn children by improving maternal health with increased access to services, by aligning payment with quality, with targeted interventions, and by improving the use and collection of data to study outcomes, among other steps."

"Steadily increasing maternal mortality rates are a public health crisis that puts mothers of color and low-income mothers especially at risk," said **Senator Nilsa Cruz Perez**. "This is an urgent public health issue that demands a proactive approach. We have to act to close the serious problem here in the state – pregnant women are not receiving the same level of healthcare when it comes to race and economic status in the state. We are working in a collaborative effort with a broad array of stakeholders – mothers, fathers, health professionals, medical educators and experts, legislators, health agencies, community advocates and others – to help all women have a healthy pregnancy and safe delivery and to close the disparity for women of color and low-income mothers"

"It will take a coordinated effort to change the course of maternal health from where we are now," said **Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera**. "Our commitment in the Assembly to address the concerns raised by the exceedingly high infant and maternal mortality rate is steadfast. We will continue to work with our colleagues and the administration to improve services for women and their children throughout New Jersey."

"This is a human health crisis. This affects future generations. We, in the Assembly, are committed with you to doing whatever it takes to address these concerns and make maternal health a top priority," said **Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. "It's time again for reproductive justice for women and their babies. It's time to work toward strengthening preventive and supportive care for mothers before and after birth. It's time to restore the beginning of motherhood as a special time for a woman and her baby."

"Maternal health awareness day is aimed toward educating both patients and physicians to the ongoing maternal mortality crisis in this country," said **Ryan Hansen, President of the Tara Hansen Foundation, husband of Tara Hansen**. "We believe that education and awareness are key to creating more successful outcomes and ensuring the safety of every woman, at every hospital, every time. We are proud that New Jersey is the first state to recognize this day of awareness and look forward to New Jersey becoming a leader in his space."

"Physicians and caregivers across New Jersey and throughout the nation work around-the-clock to care for the communities we serve," said **Brian Ragnolati, President and CEO, Atlantic Health System and Chair, American Hospital Association**. "Patients entrust us with doing the right thing for their families, yet every day, we grapple with disparities in care affecting health outcomes. To solve this problem, we are honored to partner with the First Lady and the State to ensure that every mother and child receives the right care at the right time – during every stage of pregnancy, at delivery and beyond. Working as a team, we will create the accessible, affordable, quality care our families deserve."

"I commend the First Lady for calling the public's attention to maternal mortality rates, disparities in care, and reducing unnecessary cesarean births, all of which have been a top priority for Cooper University Health Care and we are honored that our successful efforts in reducing cesarean births have been recognized by experts in the field,"

said **Adrienne Kirby, executive chairman and CEO of Cooper University Health Care.**

"It demands a collective resolve to ensure all New Jersey moms and babies have every opportunity for good health," said **Cathleen Bennett, President and CEO of the New Jersey Hospital Association (NJHA).** The Perinatal Quality Collaborative at NJHA is one of just 13 such programs nationally to be funded by the CDC to engage in this important work. Together with our stakeholders, and with our partners at DOH, we are committed to reducing pregnancy complications; reducing racial, ethnic and geographic disparities; and reducing pre-term births as part of our mission to improve the health of all the people of New Jersey."

"MomsRising is proud to support the First Lady's Nurture NJ campaign, which takes important steps toward preventing maternal deaths across the state," said **Nadia Hussain, Campaign Director for Maternal Justice Programs at MomsRising.** "New Jersey has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the country, and due to racial bias in our healthcare system, black women are disproportionately affected regardless of their education or socioeconomic status. The result is wholly preventable deaths that leave motherless children, distraught families, and grieving communities in their wake. This campaign will help change that by raising awareness of the factors driving these racial disparities and providing the resources and tools necessary to combat maternal deaths. We commend the First Lady for her commitment to the health and safety of New Jersey's women and children, and to eliminate the abhorrent disparity for women and infants of color."

"Action Together New Jersey (ATNJ) would like to thank First Lady Murphy for her compassion, commitment and urgent response to the crisis in maternal child health and health care disparities in the black community," said **Pamela Brug, MD, FACOG, Union County Chair of Acting Together New Jersey.** "Short term ATNJ is committed to identify opportunities and support the implementation of best practices to improve the quality of health care and the healthcare experience for women and children. Long term our organization is empowered and committed to disrupt the silence of systemic health care disparities. We are prepared for and excited about opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue about the impedence of sustainable progress towards exceptional quality in maternal child health. Nurture NJ Campaign will provide many opportunities to make a difference."

"New Jersey has a high preterm birth rate. Why are we not talking about it? Those 40 weeks in the womb are critical to a healthy foundation," said **Kaleena Berryman, Director of the Abbott Leadership Institute.** "We have to talk about the issues, talk to mothers about their experiences, and develop concrete solutions."

Governor Murphy issued a proclamation (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_t.e2ma.net_click_j48u5_nreddit_nbp7gg&d=DwMFaQ&c=4BTEw-1msHjOY4ITcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=xF3DPDNEH8rwpTwktOjb4MHQ0EgF6v3M0zt3hszQvyU&m=uluwKuQSE9tgbs2hb1qZ6sgumT9u5LVfK1MtRjz29Xg&s=WUUh-YHi-fz6PCc8XlsJbBJW3XZlyOzw&e=) recognizing January 23 as Maternal Health Awareness Day in New Jersey. Today marks the second annual observance of Maternal Health Awareness Day. New Jersey was the first state to designate a day to raise public awareness about maternal health and promote maternal safety.

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