

State of New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy

First Lady Tammy Murphy to Host Family Festival in Camden to Fight Maternal and Infant Health Crisis

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CAMDEN – As part of her statewide Nurture NJ campaign, First Lady Tammy Murphy will host a Family Festival on Saturday, March 2, from 11:00 a.m. to 2 p.m., at Octavius V. Catto Family School in Camden. The Camden Family Festival, which is funded by the Nicholson Foundation, is hosted in collaboration with the Camden Coalition of Healthcare Providers and will feature nearly 100 participating community organizations. Attendees will have access to prenatal care and doulas, blood pressure and sugar screenings, parent support groups, eye exams, pediatric services, mental health and addiction services, energy assistance programs, day care centers, food and housing assistance programs, and more. There will also be performances from local artists, raffle prizes, face painting, and balloon animals.

"New Jersey's maternal and infant mortality rates are startling, and for woman and babies of color the statistics are even more dire," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "If we are to save our mothers and babies, we must simultaneously work on both implicit bias in our healthcare systems and on the economic and social factors that contribute to the disparities. Through our Nurture NJ campaign, Family Festivals connect parents and caregivers with state, county, and local resources, creating a comprehensive approach to access care, support, resources, and relief."

The Family Festival event series targets cities with the highest black maternal and infant mortality rates in the state and provides families with information on state, county, and local resources for family care. Camden City was chosen as the next location for many reasons, as the city has the second highest percentage of pre-term births in New Jersey and the highest percentage of infant deaths. Camden's Family Festival will be the third held in the state, with previous festivals held in Paterson and Trenton. During the Paterson and Trenton festivals, over 800 attendees interacted with over 150 providers to learn more about state, county, and local programs and services.

Nurture NJ is 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 campaign, which is devoted 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. Nurture NJ includes internal collaboration between departments and agencies; an annual Black Maternal and Infant Health Leadership Summit; the First Lady's Family Festival event series; and a robust social media strategy to inform and raise awareness.

"Just over a month ago in Camden, First Lady Tammy Murphy unveiled a sweeping commitment to raise awareness about and work to combat high maternal and infant mortality rates. Today, the Murphy Administration is taking action in our communities by connecting parents and caregivers with much-needed resources," **said Congressman Donald Norcross**. "I'm proud to join the First Lady in making sure all families have access to health services and supports. We all need to work together on the local, state and national levels to improve the health and safety for New Jersey's women and children."

"Maternal and prenatal care are vital health services for women and their children," said **Senator Nilsa Cruz-Perez**. "These are preventive services that can have a significant and long-lasting impact on the lives of children and their mothers. Sometimes, they can even save lives. We have to do all that we can to close the gap in health outcomes for families of color. The facts show that they experience higher mortality rates and greater levels of health problems that can and should be prevented and treated with these prenatal services."

"We're grateful to shine the light on health issues in our urban areas who have not been well-served all the time,"

said Assemblymembers Patricia Egan Jones and William Spearman. "This event helps us draw attention to the problems in maternal healthcare in New Jersey. We welcome the First Lady to Camden and thank her for using her high-profile to encourage people to learn about the resources available to them."

"We all must do our part to inform, to raise awareness, and to support mothers and infants in urban areas like Camden," **said Camden Mayor Frank Moran.** "Healthcare is not negotiable and should not be dictated by a person's zip code, economic status or ethnicity. Camden has one of the highest rates of both pre-term births and infant deaths in New Jersey. I commend New Jersey's First Lady Tammy Murphy for partnering with local agencies here in Camden and organizations from throughout the State of New Jersey. Her Nurture NJ campaign and Family Festivals are helping to bring vital resources directly to those most impacted and living within our communities."

"We're happy to make our services available during this great opportunity to connect woman and families with the many resources and programs available through the Department of Health," **said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal.**

"Improving maternal and infant health and combatting the unacceptable disparity in maternal and birth outcomes for African-American women and infants in New Jersey is a Murphy Administration priority. The First Lady has worked tirelessly to bring community leaders, clinical experts, advocates and families together to help change this trajectory and improve outcomes for moms and babies," **said New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson.** "Human Services strongly supports the First Lady's Nurture NJ campaign and will be out in force at the Camden Family Festival to link people with our many great programs, including Medicaid, food assistance, child care assistance and other supports to help families to thrive. We look forward to seeing everyone there and providing vital assistance that can help families succeed."

"New Jersey is committed to statewide solutions which reduce racial and ethnic disparities in access to services and allow mothers and children to thrive," **said New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer.** "The First Lady's Nurture NJ campaign and Family Festival series connect families in underserved populations with the resources and services available within their community. DCF is proud to partner with the First Lady on these initiatives that help to strengthen families and encourage all NJ residents to be safe, healthy and connected."

"We are delighted to be working with First Lady Murphy and our community partners to put on this event and connect Camden residents with community resources," **said Kathleen Noonan, CEO of Camden Coalition.** "Maternal and infant health are important issues that we must tackle locally and across the state, and Nurture NJ is a program the Camden Coalition is proud to support."

"The Nicholson Foundation is proud to support the Camden Family Festival and partner with the office of the First Lady in helping community residents connect with needed health and social services," **said Arturo Brito, Executive Director of The Nicholson Foundation.** It is about ensuring that every single person has the opportunity for a healthy, happy, and productive life."

"The Camden City School District is excited to partner with First Lady Tammy Murphy, Mayor Frank Moran and the Camden Coalition to host the Camden Family Festival at the Octavius V. Catto Family School," **said Katrina McCombs, Acting Superintendent of Camden School District.** "As an educator and mother of two beautiful daughters, I know firsthand the importance of good maternal and infant health. As a woman of color, I am also keenly aware that disparities in maternal and infant health still exist in high poverty communities of color. Unfortunately, such disparities can negatively influence children's academic and social outcomes. That is why First Lady Murphy's Nurture NJ initiative is so critical in ensuring equitable access to resources necessary for enhancing maternal and infant health."

[Back to Top](#)

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