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Lt. Governor Guadagno Joins Families of Grant Recipients to Raise Awareness for Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund

Friday, December 18, 2015

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More than 191 applicants already approved for grants in excess of \$3.2 million in CICRF support for the first half of Fiscal Year 2016



Trenton, NJ – Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno today met with the families of children who have received grants from the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund (CICRF) in the State House to share their stories and educate other families in need about the CICRF.

CICRF grants provide financial assistance to applicants with costly medical bills associated with their child's illness that are not covered by health insurance. For the first half of Fiscal Year 2016, more than 191 applicants have already been approved for grants in excess of \$3.2 million in CICRF support.

"When a child has a catastrophic illness, the last thing the family should be concerned about is the price tag associated with life-saving treatments," said Lt.

Governor Guadagno. "The Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund protects and empowers families that have run out of conventional options and provides a lifeline so that the families can get back to what is truly important – happiness, health, and increased quality of life for their children."

The Schwartz family of Lebanon attended the event today and shared their experiences working with CICRF. Their sons are both diagnosed with mood disorders, anxiety disorders and substance use disorders. They required long-term medical care that was not fully covered by the family's medical insurance. The family received a total grant award of \$156,630.10, for the outstanding cost of treatment that their sons received when they were teenagers.

"I cannot express my gratitude for the financial relief my family received from the CICRF," said Roxanne Schwartz. "Both of my sons have mental health and addiction issues that have been near-fatal. I naively believed that our private health insurance would help us since the Mental Health and Addiction Parity Act has been passed. I was shocked that most of their professional care was denied and the expenses were exorbitant. All I cared about was that I wanted to save my son's lives. The financial stress is absolutely devastating. I was relieved emotionally when I found CICRF. Finally, someone cared about our ordeal and wanted to help us."

CICRF is a dedicated, revolving, non-lapsing trust fund collected from an annual contribution of \$1.50 per employee for all employers operating under the New Jersey Unemployment Compensation Law. Since its establishment by statute in 1988, CICRF has distributed more than \$163.2 million in grants to 8000 families.

"Our commission members are committed to fulfilling the mission of the fund. The fund exists to provide financial relief for families facing devastatingly high uncovered medical expenses for their children regarding their income," said Dr.

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Janice Pronnicki, the Commission's chairperson. "We hope that today's event will make more families aware that they may be eligible for help from the Fund for the cost of their child's necessary medical treatment, equipment and other expenses."

CICRF defines a catastrophic illness as any sickness or condition, acute or chronic, for which expenses are incurred that are not fully covered by insurance, state or federal programs or other sources. New Jersey residents with children who have uncovered medical expenses may apply for grants to reimburse specific, documented, medically-related costs. Families are eligible if they have lived in New Jersey for at least three months prior to the date of application, if the child was 21 years or younger when the expenses were incurred and if expenses exceed a certain percentage of the family's income.

For more information about the Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund, visit www.njcatastrophicfund.org or call 1-800-335-FUND (3863).

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