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[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > [2014](#) > [Governor Christie: It's About Valuing Human Life](#)

## Governor Christie: It's About Valuing Human Life

Thursday, May 08, 2014

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### Governor Christie: It's About Valuing Human Life


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psM4PknBbSo>

#### Transcript:

**Benjamin Chin, NJ-STEP Graduate:** It's an honor and privilege to be here today, because it's not often that formerly incarcerated people with experiences like mine – experiences of childhood trauma and early mental illness diagnosis, addiction, contact with the criminal justice system and finally, recovery, get the opportunity to be up here. But that is changing. The voices of formerly incarcerated people, individuals in recovery, are now being heard, are now being brought to the table, and are now being valued. And so for that, I thank you. I stand here having been supported by two groundbreaking initiatives – NJ-STEP's Mountain View Project and the Rutgers Recovery House. It was these initiatives that have, through higher education, allowed me to transition from incarcerating to graduating with honors and distinction from our great state university. (Applause)

**Governor Christie:** The person that you've heard from just prior to me, Ben and the other students that I met in a meeting I had prior are shining examples to all of you that this is possible and in fact it's within your grasp. This program to me not only does extraordinary things for citizens of New Jersey and I want to thank the Commissioner of Corrections, who is here Gary Lanigan and the Secretary of Higher Education, Rochelle Hendricks, who played key roles in that as well. Thank you both for the work that you're doing and on behalf of all the people of the state. But I believe this is also about the preciousness and value of human life. You know, in politics, often people talk about life in a way that can be controversial because we have different views of when life begins and how life should be treated. I say to my Republican colleagues all the time that if in fact you are pro-life, you need to be pro-life after they leave the womb too (applause). And that this program is about how precious human life is, how each human life is truly a gift from God, and that we need to treat each human life that way, no matter how we find it. Sometimes we find it with potential that is so obvious and burning that it nearly blinds you. Sometimes we find that potential in a 16-year-old woman sitting in a jail cell addicted to heroin. Her life is no less precious, nor valuable, nor a gift from God, than the life

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of that 16-year-old student whose potential is so obvious that it blinds you. We need to make sure that we bring that message to everyone and through programs like this we're beginning to be able to do that.

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