State of New York

Executive Chamber

Proclamation

Whereas, New York State is a leader in supporting pregnant persons through robust policy and programming, and in 2025, led the way in becoming the first in the nation to observe an awareness day focused on syphilis during pregnancy; and

Whereas, transmission of syphilis from a gestating person to their unborn baby—known as congenital syphilis—is entirely preventable with equitable access to timely screening and treatment, and failure to provide such resources can lead to severe and sometimes fatal medical complications during pregnancy, including congenital disabilities or death to an infant; and

Whereas, the health and well-being of expectant persons and their newborn infants has been impacted by the sharp increase in syphilis during pregnancy in New York State and across the United States; in New York State, the number of congenital syphilis diagnoses increased by 155% from 2020-2024 and by 516% from 2015-2024, and syphilis-related stillbirths and infant deaths increased in New York State, with over 20 syphilis-related infant deaths reported from 2019-2024; and

Whereas, syphilis is often referred to as the "Great Imitator" due to its potential for mild symptoms that can be easily mistaken for other illnesses, or go entirely unnoticed; for this reason, raising awareness, promoting early detection, and ensuring timely treatment are critical steps in syphilis prevention; eliminating syphilis during pregnancy, and improving care for pregnant persons and their newborns; and

Whereas, pregnant persons, those of child-bearing capacity, and their sexual partners are strongly encouraged to establish proactive sexual health routines that include regular health screenings, timely treatment, and comprehensive care; and

Whereas, health care providers are instrumental in New York State's efforts to eliminate syphilis during pregnancy by adopting clinical practices that prioritize timely screening, open dialogue, and stigma-free care in historically marginalized and affected communities; and

Whereas, the Congenital Syphilis Elimination Strategic Planning Group was established in New York State in 2023, convening a vital collaboration of community-based organizations, health care providers, individuals impacted by syphilis during pregnancy, and the broader community to develop and implement a coordinated, comprehensive, and systematic framework for statewide elimination of syphilis during pregnancy; and

Whereas, in 2024, New York State amended Public Health Law §2308, Part AA of Chapter 57 of the Laws of 2023, to require at least three syphilis screenings during pregnancy—at the first prenatal exam, during the third trimester and at delivery—thereby supporting healthy pregnancies, ensuring timely syphilis detection, and facilitating early treatment; and

Whereas, honoring Syphilis During Pregnancy Awareness Day serves as a powerful and ongoing reminder to all New Yorkers about the critical importance of syphilis screening during pregnancy and protecting the health of pregnant persons and their newborns;

Now, Therefore, I, Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim August 24, 2026, as

SYPHILIS DURING PREGNANCY AWARENESS DAY

in the Empire State.

Given under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State at the Capitol in the City of Albany this nineteenth day of August in the year two thousand twenty-six.

Secretary to the Governor
Karen Persichilli Keogh

Kathy Hochul
Governor