

STATE OF ARKANSAS
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME – GREETINGS:

WHEREAS: Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. While many unknown factors play a role in birth defects occurrence, steps can be taken to help prevent or limit certain risks for birth defects, such as exposure to chemicals in the home or at work, use of alcohol and recreational drugs, a lack of folic acid in a woman's diet, and lack of prenatal care. Therefore, let us make a PACT for prevention! Plan ahead. Avoid harmful substances. Choose a healthy lifestyle. Talk to your healthcare provider; and

WHEREAS: Every 4 minutes, a U.S. baby is born with a birth defect. Birth defects are a leading cause of death in the first year of life, causing one in every five infant deaths. These conditions lead to \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the United States. In Arkansas, birth defects account for about 100 infant deaths every year; and

WHEREAS: Birth defects can occur in any family regardless of race, ethnicity, health history, economic status, or level of education; and

WHEREAS: About half of all pregnancies are unplanned, contributing to late entry into prenatal care and presenting a barrier to optimal pregnancy management, particularly during the crucial first weeks of a baby's development; and

WHEREAS: Early identification of a child with a birth defect coupled with early intervention services typically improves the child's quality of life and may even save his or her life; and

WHEREAS: Managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant can help increase a woman's chance of having a healthy baby. The National Birth Defects Prevention Network and Center for Disease Control encourage parents-to-be to make a PACT for prevention to take steps to help reduce their risk for birth defects. These steps include: planning ahead for pregnancy, avoiding harmful substances, choosing a healthy lifestyle, and talking to a healthcare provider before and during pregnancy; and

WHEREAS: The good health and well-being of the people of Arkansas are enhanced by the support of a national effort to educate about preconception health and strategies to prevent birth defects; and

WHEREAS: The Arkansas Center for Birth Defects Research and Prevention at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences join with the March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network, as well as many dedicated volunteers, healthcare professionals, and parent groups by participating in this promotion;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ASA HUTCHINSON, Governor of the State of Arkansas, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the laws of the State of Arkansas, do hereby proclaim January 2017, as

BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 30th day of December, in the year of our Lord 2016.



Asa Hutchinson

Asa Hutchinson, Governor

Mark Martin

Mark Martin, Secretary Of State