

**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 the occurrence of birth defects, 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 tobacco, alcohol, and street drugs, a lack of folic acid in a woman's diet, lack of prenatal care, and infections during pregnancy; 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: Taking steps to avoid infections during pregnancy can reduce the chance that a child is born with a birth defect. The National Birth Defects Prevention Network and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention encourage parents-to-be to reduce the chance of developing an infection during pregnancy by observing the following guidelines: Get vaccinated, Prevent insect bites, Practice good hygiene, and Talk to your healthcare provider; 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;

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 2018 as

NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH IN ARKANSAS

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas to be affixed this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of December, in the year of our Lord 2017.



Asa Hutchinson, Governor

Attest

Mark Martin, Secretary Of State