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TO: The Honorable Detroit City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director   
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: February 29, 2024

RE: **RESOLUTION DECLARING APRIL AS “SYPHILIS AWARENESS MONTH” IN  
DETROIT**

Council Member Angela Whitfield-Calloway requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) provide a resolution declaring April as “Syphilis Awareness Month.”

Please contact our office if we can be of any further assistance.

**BY MEMBER ANGELA WHITFIELD-CALLOWAY**

**RESOLUTION DECLARING APRIL AS “SYPHILIS AWARENESS MONTH” IN DETROIT**

**WHEREAS** Following a national trend, the number of syphilis cases has doubled in Michigan between 2017 and 2022, and the infection rate in Detroit has tripled during that time period according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services;<sup>1</sup> and

**WHEREAS** Experts have pointed to a number of factors contributing to the increase in infections, especially in babies being born with syphilis infections: insufficient prenatal health care, lack of testing and education, public health dollars shifted away from sexually transmitted infections (STI) testing to COVID-19 testing, and a shortage of the antibiotic used to treat syphilis;<sup>2</sup> and

**WHEREAS** The rapid increase in syphilis infections has taken medical providers by surprise as infections had drastically declined for decades and reached an all-time low by the late 1990s, however 2022 saw the greatest number of infections since 1950; and

**WHEREAS** In Michigan, men account for a majority of syphilis cases at 79%, and infections disproportionately affect Black men, who are more than 10 times more likely to be diagnosed with syphilis than White men;<sup>3</sup> and

**WHEREAS** While syphilis is treatable with antibiotics, it can be difficult to diagnose as the symptoms can mimic other medical issues and it can remain dormant for long periods of time. If left untreated, syphilis can result in severe negative health implications, and it will often complicate pregnancies where the mother carries an infection; and

**WHEREAS** The rise in syphilis cases requires a coordinated public health response that increases public education and awareness of STIs while also providing necessary resources for testing and treatment; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED** The Detroit City Council hereby recognizes April as Syphilis Awareness Month, **NOW BE IT FINALLY**

**RESOLVED** That the Detroit City Clerk send copies of this resolution to the Detroit Health Department and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Keeping-Michigan-Healthy/HIVSTI/Data-and-Statistics/2022/2022-STIs-and-Trends-in-Michigan-Overview.pdf?rev=a6f275bc2f8b4670b3012b1e42749456&hash=BE2782A31811B9EDC498A9998717101A>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2024/02/26/why-syphilis-cases-are-surg-ing-in-us-michigan-after-nearly-being-eradicated/72658161007/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/-/media/Project/Websites/mdhhs/Keeping-Michigan-Healthy/HIVSTI/Data-and-Statistics/2022/2022-STIs-and-Trends-in-Michigan-Overview.pdf?rev=a6f275bc2f8b4670b3012b1e42749456&hash=BE2782A31811B9EDC498A9998717101A>