

2026 HELLEN KELLER DEAFBLIND AWARENESS WEEK PROCLAMATION

CONNECTED BY TOUCH: BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING BRIDGES

WHEREAS Helen Keller was one of the most accomplished, respected, and renowned Americans who was deafblind, and her advocacy on behalf of New Jersey’s blind and deafblind residents directly influenced state leaders to establish the New Jersey Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired in 1910; and

WHEREAS more than 2.9 million people in the United States are deafblind – that is, they have a combined vision and hearing loss that affects their ability to communicate, access information, and safely navigate their environment; and

WHEREAS approximately 83,000 New Jersey residents have such a combined vision and hearing loss; and

WHEREAS, today, people who are deafblind contribute to our communities as educators, advocates, professionals, artists, and leaders – enriching our communities through their unique perspectives and experiences; advancing their education and careers; driving innovation in accessibility; participating in social, recreational, and cultural activities; managing their daily lives; and engaging meaningfully in civic and community life; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 National DeafBlind Awareness Week theme, “Connected by Touch: Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges,” recognizes touch as the foundation of connection for the deafblind community, supporting communication, navigation, learning, work, and daily life; and

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey continues to uphold Helen Keller's legacy by providing critical services, resources, and support to residents who are deafblind to maximize their opportunities for empowered, productive lives in the communities of their choice; and

WHEREAS it is appropriate and necessary to raise awareness of the accomplishments, abilities, and potential of our fellow citizens who are deafblind; to challenge outdated stereotypes; and to celebrate Helen Keller’s remarkable example of hope, courage, and determination as an author, humanitarian, and advocate for social justice; and

WHEREAS the State of New Jersey supports the full inclusion and participation of all deafblind individuals in our communities and encourages all residents to recognize and honor their contributions, as well as the dedication and partnership of the organizations that support them.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, **Mikie Sherrill**, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

JUNE 25 THROUGH JULY 1, 2026

AS

HELEN KELLER DEAFBLIND AWARENESS WEEK

in New Jersey.