

# National Black Church Initiative

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## For Immediate Release

### **The National Black Church Initiative Launches Major Sickle Cell Disease Education and Outreach Initiative in 100 churches in Atlanta, Georgia**

**Washington D.C., -- December 13, 2021** -- The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 150,000 African American and Latino churches that constitutes 27.7 million churchgoers, is partnering with the sickle cell disease community to launch a major disease education and outreach initiative in approximately 100 churches in the Atlanta, Georgia metropolitan area.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited group of disorders in which red blood cells contort into a sickle shape. The cells die early, leaving a shortage of healthy red blood cells (sickle cell anemia), which can block blood flow causing pain (sickle cell crisis), organ damage, and early death.

For decades, sickle cell disease has been a stubborn and consistent health issue among African Americans and other ethnic groups of Mediterranean ancestry. There has been a lack of research and progress in the treatment and care of sickle cell disease, until relatively recently. In addition, there is a need to drive greater awareness and engagement, particularly in the African American and LatinX communities about this disease.

NBCI launched this extraordinary initiative as a demonstration project in 100 churches in the Atlanta metro area providing critical education, literature, and sessions dealing with the essential issues of the disease such as early diagnosis, chronic crisis, and inadequate treatment.

The program, which is made possible by a grant from Global Blood Therapeutics (GBT), launches amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has magnified the challenges and disparities that people living with sickle cell disease face.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of the NBCI states, "After years of limited progress in sickle cell disease, there are finally new therapies that have been developed over the past few years that can help people suffering and dying too young. The Black church wants to focus its attention in providing a broad and science-based educational program that will take a train the trainer approach and distribute literature to deal with the issues surrounding sickle cell disease and sickle cell trait. Our goal is to ensure that patients with sickle cell are treated with respect and dignity when they access the healthcare system and get the quality care they need and deserve. Many sickle cell patients are forced to seek primary care from emergency rooms and are often denied relief for pain and treated as recreational drug seekers, given the issues that arose during the opioid crisis."

“NBCI will use the full force of its African American churches to make sure our brothers and sisters who suffer from sickle cell disease in our congregations get the treatment they deserve under both the human and man-made laws of our country,” continued Rev. Evans. We are also tackling the lack of efficient policies that affect sickle cell patients in every state and using our enormous political influence and power in Congress to ensure that every sickle cell patient receives complete clinical care services today.”

The NBCI’s sickle cell disease education and outreach strategy is a part of an overall ten-year commitment to deal with underlying secondary issues that have plagued the African American community and have exacerbated COVID-19 among African Americans. NBCI’s ten-year health disparity initiative that includes both the national flu campaign and the forthcoming national clinical strategy plan are significant efforts by NBCI to improve health disparity and health outcomes in the Black community.

The following sickle cell disease organizations are in support of the National Black Church Initiative’s (NBCI) program objectives: Sickle Cell Community Consortium, Sickle Cell Disease Association of America, INC. and Sickle Cell Disease Foundation.

### **About NBCI**

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) coalition of 150,000 African American and Latino churches with 27.7 million members nationwide working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all members, congregants, churches, and the public. The National Black Church Initiative’s methodology utilizes faith and sound health science. NBCI’s purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose primary mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box, and cutting-edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI’s programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science-based strategies and techniques, and methods that work.