



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

A Tribute to Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver 1952 - 2023

U.S. and New Jersey state flags were ordered to fly at half-staff at all state buildings and facilities from Friday, August 4, 2023, through Monday, September 4, 2023, in recognition and remembrance of Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver. [Executive Order 338](#)

For information about the funeral services, please click [here](#).

The bright, morning rays of summer sunlight awaken a young New Jersey girl. Whether she's looking out at a farm in a southern town, the shoreline of our Jersey coast, a backyard swing set in a suburban subdivision, or high-rises in a bustling city neighborhood, this young girl can dream big and aim high.

As she learns the history of her community and her state, she, along with the children of our state, should know of a self-described "Jersey Girl" born in Newark, who lived for a time on Bock Avenue, and was a graduate of Weequahic High School, Sheila Y. Oliver.

Empowered by the courage of Fannie Lou Hamer, Sheila Oliver set on a personal quest to make a difference. She began by pursuing higher education, graduating from Lincoln University, a historically Black University, with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and Columbia University with a Master of Science degree in Community Organization, Planning, and Administration.

Inspired by Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, who admonished, that "you do not make progress by standing on the sidelines, whimpering and complaining; you make progress by implementing ideas," Sheila Oliver—a long-time East Orange resident—became the first Black woman to serve as Speaker of the State Assembly, and the second in US history to lead a state legislative house. Once elected as the Lieutenant Governor, she became the highest-ranking Black woman to hold statewide office, while also serving as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs.

Lieutenant Governor Oliver courageously sacrificed to serve the people of New Jersey, making each day count, and selflessly giving to make a difference.

A true trailblazer, Lieutenant Governor Oliver helped ensure that the future of all "Jersey Girls" is limitless and free of many of the obstacles that girls faced back when she was born in 1952. Now, children across the state enjoy opportunities made possible by her work.



To honor Lieutenant Governor Oliver's story, her service, and her sacrifice, we—all those who call New Jersey home—should strive to move our state forward.

This moment is a heightened call to action—especially for those of us who were not envisioned in the liberty and prosperity promised in 1787—to serve and sacrifice not only to preserve, but to extend the opportunities that Lieutenant Governor Oliver fought for.

Lieutenant Governor, thank you for your service. Thank you for taking the time, to meet, listen, and work on behalf of the voiceless. LG, thank you for leaving us better than you found us—well done.

We press on to ensure that your legacy lives on.

INITIATIVES ADVANCING THE WORK OF THE WEALTH DISPARITY TASK FORCE

CO-CHAIRLED BY LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OLIVER



Spring 2022 Photo Credit Edwin Torres

Several budget initiatives were championed by the Wealth Disparity Task Force in a collective effort with legislative partners and advocates to advance the work that addresses the long-standing wealth disparities which disproportionately affect Black and Latino households. Here are some of the impactful initiatives:

First-generation homeownership: Allocating an additional \$15 million to the Down Payment Assistance Program directly supporting first-generation homeowners, and also launching a Resilient Homes Construction Pilot program to fund the rehabilitation and construction of affordable homes.

Eliminating public defender fees: Eliminating fees, liens, and warrants for those who require public defender representation, while increasing the public defender compensation rate to attract more attorneys.

Canceling personal medical debt and expanding coverage: Using federal pandemic relief grants to cancel personal medical debt, which disproportionately falls on seniors, families with lower incomes, and people of color. Also expanding vital health care coverage to all children through the Cover All Kids initiative and health care subsidies to eligible applicants through Get Covered NJ, regardless of immigration status.

Prescription drug coverage: Based on the work of the NJ Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency, this new set of laws places a flat cap on the out-of-pocket contribution for any covered person prescribed a rapid-acting, long-acting, pre-mixed insulin product, an epinephrine auto-injector device, or a prescription asthma inhaler across insurance providers.

Student Loan Redemption: With continued funding, the Primary Care Practitioner Loan Redemption Program – through the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority—will provide up to \$200,000 in student loan redemption for two to four years of service as a primary care provider, including physicians, certified nurse practitioners, and certified nurse who practice in areas of New Jersey that reflect a health professional shortage.

Freedom Schools: Increasing investments in Freedom Schools in New Jersey, which provide summer and after-school enrichment to empower school-aged children, and community schools, which partner school districts and local providers to deliver critical non-academic services to students.

Supply chain diversity and employee ownership: Investing in initiatives that increase supply chain diversity and employee ownership business conversions with \$6 million, and supporting urban economic and community revitalization with over \$85 million.

Social Impact Investment Fund (SIIF): Deploying a new financing tool, SIIF, to provide below-market loans for socially conscious projects in distressed municipalities. Also allocating federal funds to create a Boardwalk Preservation Fund, Urban Investment Fund, and Atlantic City Economic Foundations Fund.

Expanding access to college-level courses in high school: Creating new grant programs with funding for districts to deliver wrap-around supports that ensure underserved student populations can affordably access and successfully complete Dual Enrollment and/or Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.



Wealth Disparity Task Force - For more information on the initiatives that advance the work of the WDTF. See nj.gov for more information on the new investments centered around increasing affordability, promoting fiscal responsibility, and creating world-class opportunities for everyone to succeed that build on the historic progress made over the last five years.



JULY & AUGUST UPDATES FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Announcements from the Office of the Governor

News and Resources from New Jersey Departments and Authorities

Wealth Disparity Task Force

Internship and Job Opportunities

Apply for Programs

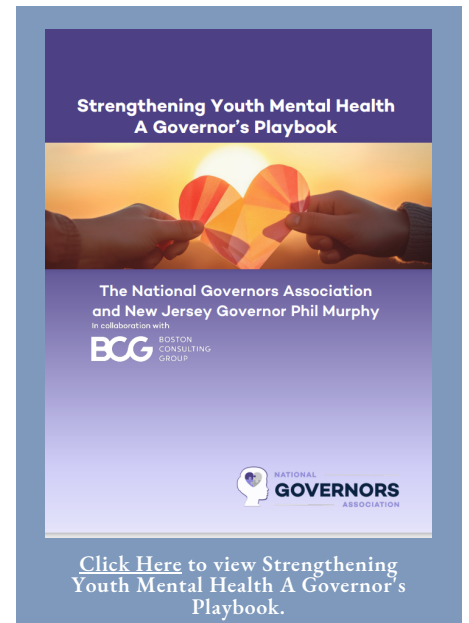
July and August Observances

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Governor Murphy Announces Playbook for Governors to Address the Nation's Youth Mental Health Crisis: During the National Governor's Association (NGA) Annual Meeting, Governor Murphy, NGA Chair, announced a "Strengthening Youth Mental Health: A Governor's Playbook." It includes four key pillars, addressing prevention and building resilience, increasing awareness and reducing stigma, ensuring access and affordability of quality treatment and care, and training and supporting caregivers and educators. The playbook also breaks down each pillar into 35 nonpartisan policy recommendations.

First Lady Tammy Murphy unveiled a complementary policy roadmap, "Tackling the Maternal and Infant Health Crisis: A Governor's Playbook."

Governor Murphy Signs Fiscal Year 2024 Budget into Law: Governor Murphy signed the Fiscal Year 2024 budget into law on June 30th. The budget includes record levels of direct property tax relief as well as additional aid for seniors and renters. It also includes historic levels of school funding, and supports investments in the economy, workforce development, and affordable housing.



NEWS AND RESOURCES FROM NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENTS AND AUTHORITIES

The Bloomfield College and Montclair State University merger took effect on July 1, 2023: The merger enables Bloomfield College, a Predominantly Black Institution, a Hispanic-Serving Institution, and a Minority Serving Institution in New Jersey, to continue to educate students who are often historically excluded from higher education by merging with Montclair State University.

The New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency board approved a Memorandum of Understanding: The MOU finalizes \$305 million in issued American Rescue Plan funds for New Jersey's Affordable Housing Production Fund. In addition to multiple efforts to address the state's affordable housing needs, the goal is to build more than 3,300 affordable housing units across 43 developments statewide.

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Launches Infrastructure Resiliency Program for Communities Impacted by Hurricane Ida: The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs launched the Resilient Communities Programs to help counties and municipalities make public infrastructure such as roads, drainage systems, and buildings more resilient to current and future natural hazards.

New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S): The Department of Children and Families is launching NJ4S to deliver wellness and prevention supports from fifteen regional hubs, as well as locations in the community.

Alternative Responses to Reduce Instances of Violence and Escalation (ARRIVE) Together: The Office of the Attorney General continues to expand the ARRIVE Together which pairs police officers with mental health professionals when responding to a mental health crisis.





INTERNSHIP AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES & EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

New Jersey Transit Police Department to Accept Applications for New Officers: Application for October's Police Exam are now open, the first 2,000 applicants will be considered to join one of the most prestigious law enforcement agencies in the country. Candidates can click [here](#) for more information and to apply.

Please visit the **Civil Service Commission's website** to learn about state employment opportunities and job announcements. [Click here for more information.](#)

APPLY FOR PROGRAMS

The 2023 Governor's Conference on Housing and Economic Development is offering six Session Tracks. These sessions are designed to give information, interactive programming, local and national perspectives on key issues, successful project case studies, project financing resources, community resources, economic development and much more. Click [here](#) to register.



The New Jersey Office of Broadband Connectivity launched a survey on Digital Equity Resources and Programs. The data from this survey will be used to create a statewide community resource guide and will inform the development of the State Digital Equity Plan. [Click here to take the survey and for more information.](#)

JULY AND AUGUST OBSERVANCES

Disability Pride Month

Governor Phil Murphy has officially declared July to be Disability Pride Month! Across New Jersey, Disability Pride promotes the independence & inclusion of residents with disabilities. The New Jersey Department of Human Services provides a variety of resources for people with disabilities. More information and resources can be found [here](#).

National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

New Jersey became the first state to require schools to include mental health instruction in their curriculum in 2019. This month we bring awareness to the negative perceptions and stigma around mental health that racial and ethnic minorities often face. It is important we break the stigmas surrounding mental health and continue to empower our youth with tools to navigate life's many challenges. To access mental health resources, click [here](#).

National Black Business Month

In 2004, John William Templeton co-founded August to be "Black Business Month" which was inspired by Dr. Carter G. Woodson's "Black Business Week" established in 1926. The creation of this observance was to showcase Black business talent and prove their ability to provide quality products and services.

The African American Chamber of Commerce of New Jersey continues this tradition and celebration, they will be hosting a Black Business Month Networking Mixer which will be held August 14th. [Click here for more information on this event.](#)

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families encourages youth and parents of color to have open communication about their health. For resources, contact the Children's System of Care (1-877-652-7642).



Jayné J. Johnson,
Director of the Office
of Equity

Thank you for connecting with the NJ Office of Equity! We appreciate your interest in learning about the work of our office.

A special thanks to the following staff members who helped develop and design this newsletter:

Natasha Camhi
Policy Analyst

Emma DeMaise
Equity Policy Intern

Kermina Hanna
Policy Analyst

Jameel Muhammad
Governor's Office Intern

Christofer Robles
Equity Policy Intern

If you are not receiving this newsletter directly from us and would like to subscribe to our mailing list, please [click here](#).