



GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

Office Newsletter
January/February 2024

Governor Murphy Delivers the FY2025 State Budget Address



"With our budget, we will make life more affordable for more families. We will create new opportunities in the industries of tomorrow, and we will hand our kids a state that is better than we found it. We will hand them a New Jersey that is the best place to raise a family."

~ Governor Phil Murphy

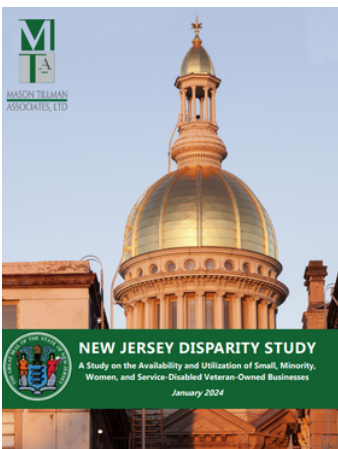
On February 27, Governor Phil Murphy delivered the New Jersey Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Address, outlining his vision for a stronger, fairer, and more affordable New Jersey. In his address, Governor Murphy highlighted the direct relief going to support families across New Jersey including the Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Tax Credit, Cover All Kids, and ANCHOR program.



For the first time in state history, this budget fully funds New Jersey's school funding formula. It continues to improve the quality of education in the state, expands over 1,000 seats of universal pre-K, provides free school meals to over 60,000 more students, and addresses the teacher shortage.

This budget also supports seniors through the Stay NJ program, Pharmaceutical Assistance for the Aged and Disabled (PAAD), and the RetireReady NJ program. The policies highlighted in this year's Budget Address exemplify New Jersey's commitment to being the best state to raise a family!

NEW JERSEY RELEASES THE STATE PUBLIC CONTRACTING DISPARITY STUDY



In January 2024, the Administration announced the findings of a comprehensive statewide disparity study commissioned to examine public contracting opportunities for Minority and Women-Owned (MWBE) businesses in New Jersey. The study, conducted by Mason Tillman and Associates (MTA) and overseen by Candice Alfonso, Chief Diversity Officer, Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion within the Department of the Treasury, reviewed more than 1.2 million records and 240,000 contracts awarded between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2020 from over 60 contracting agencies, authorities, commissions, state colleges and universities relating to goods and services, professional services, and construction.

Key findings from the study include statistically significant disparities in contracting with Minority Business Enterprises, statistically significant evidence that the state underutilizes Woman Business Enterprises, and, in the awarding of state contracting agencies' subcontracts within the construction industry, statistically significant disparities in subcontracts awarded to Minority Business Enterprises. The study was legally required before the state could implement certain measures to promote equitable contracting practices. In response to these stark disparities, the Murphy Administration is engaging with stakeholders and working with legislative partners to take administrative and legislative action. [See the full study.](#)

"The critical findings from this study will ensure the State is well equipped to address the inequities in public contracting opportunities faced by women-owned, minority-owned businesses, and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses."
~ Governor Phil Murphy



NJ GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EQUITY

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW JERSEY'S METLIFE STADIUM TO HOST THE 2026 WORLD CUP FINAL

The World Cup is coming to New Jersey! Governor Phil Murphy joined New York City Mayor Eric Adams in celebrating the recent announcement that MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, home to the New York Giants and New York Jets, is set to host the final of the FIFA World Cup in 2026. As the chosen stadium in the New York/New Jersey (NYNJ) region, MetLife Stadium will host the world's biggest sporting event.



The FIFA World Cup 2026 will be played in 16 cities across North America -- with 48 teams playing a total of 104 matches. This massive international tournament, watched by billions, will unfold over a 39-day period, with the opening match set to take place in Mexico City on June 11, 2026. MetLife Stadium will host a total of eight matches, including the final match on July 29, 2026.

This historic sporting event will not only create lifelong memories for many around the world but is projected to create more than 14,000 new jobs and generate over \$2 billion in revenue for the NYNJ region. It will also spur an unprecedented uptick in regional tourism, with a projected one million fans visiting the area.

GOVERNOR MURPHY APPOINTS NEW ACTING COMMISSIONERS OF EDUCATION AND TRANSPORTATION

Governor Murphy announced his nomination of Kevin Dehmer to serve as the next Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Education, succeeding Acting Commissioner Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan after her retirement. Acting Commissioner Dehmer has over 15 years of education policy experience at the New Jersey Department of Education and has twice served as Interim Commissioner.



Governor Murphy also announced his nomination of Francis (Fran) K. O'Connor as the next Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Transportation, succeeding Commissioner Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, who stepped into the role of the Governor's Chief of Staff. Acting Commissioner O'Connor has over 40 years of private and public sector experience.



NEW JERSEY - INDIA COMMISSION ESTABLISHED

Governor Murphy signed Executive Order No. 354 to establish the New Jersey-India Commission. This is a significant step in the ongoing partnership between the Garden State and the most populated country in the world with one of the world's fastest-growing economies. This new commission will serve as a thought group to promote cultural and educational exchanges, encourage mutual economic support, and advance bilateral trade and investments between New Jersey and India.





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LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

UNIVERSAL HOME VISITATION FOR NEW PARENTS AND NEWBORNS

In keeping with First Lady Tammy Murphy's commitment to reducing the state maternal mortality rate, New Jersey recently celebrated the launch of the Family Connects NJ program. Under this program, nurse visitation is completely free and available for all newborns and their families, irrespective of income, insurance coverage, or immigration status. This initiative also directs state agencies and health care providers to incorporate community-based perinatal health workers in an interdisciplinary care approach to support pregnant persons and caregivers into the postnatal period. It will also an essential role in supporting new parents and families as they adjust to having a baby at home.



The Family Connects NJ program is part of the Nurture NJ plan to reduce the maternal mortality rate by 50% over the next five years. This program directs the Department of Children and Families to continue expanding and offering home-based visitation programs, with a focus on models proven to reduce maternal and infant mortality. This pivotal program is being piloted throughout Cumberland, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, and Essex Counties, further positioning New Jersey as one of the best states to start or raise a family!

NEW JERSEY REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION HUB

The Reproductive Health Information Hub is a new digital hub that contains a multitude of informational pages, including guidance regarding reproductive rights, resources for reproductive health services, information regarding payment assistance, and other resources and tools.



Symbol for the Reproductive Health Information Hub: You can navigate to the page by clicking [here](#).

This online resource helps ensure that all New Jerseyans have safe access to the accurate information regarding their reproductive health. Furthermore, this information hub serves as a resource to help ensure accessibility to reproductive freedom for all who come from other states or regions.

LANGUAGE ACCESS BILL SIGNED

Recognizing the rich diversity of New Jersey, Governor Murphy signed bill S2459/A3837 into law, to address language barriers and expand access to vital state documents and resources. This law requires that state agencies provide translation, direct services, and interpretation in the seven most commonly spoken non-English languages in the state. These languages are currently Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Arabic, Korean, Gujarati, and Portuguese. These new translation services for vital documents will help ensure that language barriers will no longer pose as an obstacle for the state's non-English speakers.





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MORE LEGISLATIVE UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **The Working Class Families Anti-Hunger Act:** Governor Murphy signed a bill that expands eligibility for free school meals to over 60,000 New Jersey families. It also requires schools participating in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program to expand income eligibility to more students.
- **Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act:** Governor Murphy signed a bill establishing a Community Crisis Response Advisory Council along with response programs to be piloted in Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, and Passaic counties.
- **Community Wealth Preservation Act:** Governor Murphy signed a bill establishing the Community Wealth Preservation Program, promoting equity for homeowners and providing opportunities for purchasing or financing a foreclosed home for residents who were foreclosed-upon and their next of kin, prospective tenants and owners, and nonprofit community development corporations.
- **Demographic Data Collection:** Governor Murphy signed a bill requiring state agencies to update demographic data collection methods on Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian, and Indian diaspora residents of the state.
- **Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights:** Governor Murphy officially signed the New Jersey Domestic Worker's Bill of Rights into law, establishing anti-discrimination and anti-harassment rights and protections for domestic workers in the state.
- **Doula Access Bill:** Governor Murphy signed the Doula Access bill into law, requiring hospitals and birthing centers to develop procedural policies allowing doulas to accompany patients before, during, and after childbirth, and ensure that these guidelines are available to the public online. It also requires that a main point of contact be designated to maintain communication between facilities, staff, doulas, and their patients.
- **Mental Health Diversion Program:** Governor Murphy signed a bill officially creating the Mental Health Diversion Program, which aims to divert eligible persons away from the criminal justice system and into appropriate case management and mental health services.
- **Medicaid Covered Palliative Care:** Governor Murphy recently signed legislation that provides coverage of community-based palliative care benefits under Medicaid.
- **Sickle Cell Disease Pilot Program:** Governor Murphy signed this crucial bill which appropriates \$10.2 million to establish a three-year sickle cell disease pilot program under the Department of Health with consultation from the Department of Human Services.
- **Division of Violence Intervention and Victim Assistance (VIVA):** The Division of Violence Intervention and Victim Assistance (VIVA), through enacted legislation, was officially established within the Department of Law and Public Safety. It will play a central role in supporting survivors of domestic and sexual violence.
- **Summer Tuition Aid Grants:** To expand equitable access to higher education year-round, Governor Murphy signed legislation authorizing the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA) to award annual summer tuition aid grants (TAG).



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“In New Jersey, our greatest strength lies in our diversity.” - Governor Phil Murphy
See the full statement

FIRST QUARTER 2024 HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES

JANUARY

Muslim Heritage Month

January 1 - New Year's Day

January 15 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

January 27 - International Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 30 - Fred Korematsu Day

FEBRUARY

Black History Month

February 10 - Lunar New Year

February 14 - Ash Wednesday

February 14 - Valentine's Day

February 19 - President's Day

MARCH

Women's History Month

Irish-American Heritage Month

March 10 - Ramadan Begins

March 17 - St. Patrick's Day

March 24 - Purim

March 25 - Holi

March 29 - Good Friday

March 31 - Easter Sunday

March 31 - Trans Day of Visibility



The Governor's Office Employee Resource Groups celebrated Black History Month by exploring the contributions of Blacks in New Jersey through historical visual accounts and with tributes to trailblazers who have paved a path forward - all while enjoying food, fun, and fellowship!

The Governor's Office Employee Resource Group celebrated the Lunar New Year! Thank you to those who shared family traditions and personal narratives to enrich this enlightening experience which was filled with rich cultural exposure and delicious food. A great way to kick off the Year of the Dragon. Thank you to all who contributed to making this event a success! Gong Xi Fa Cai!



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 more about our work.

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Many thanks to Awn Rizvi, Mel Walker, and Natasha Camhi for their contributions to this issue!

