



May 27, 2022

The Honorable Governor Philip D. Murphy  
Governor of New Jersey  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

The Honorable Senate President Nicholas Scutari  
New Jersey Senate President  
PO Box 099  
Trenton, NJ 08625

The Honorable Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin  
Speaker of the General Assembly  
PO Box 098  
Trenton, NJ 08625

*VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL*

Dear Governor Murphy, Senate President Scutari, and Assembly Speaker Coughlin:

New Jersey's record-breaking surplus of at least \$10 billion and the remaining \$3 billion in flexible aid from the American Rescue Plan (ARP) offer an unprecedented opportunity to make transformative investments supporting those who struggle the most to afford living in our state.

These investments would build a more just, equitable economy for all and help dismantle racial, gender, and economic inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. Combined with long-term policy changes, these surplus dollars and recovery funds have the potential to undo pandemic-induced hardships, especially for Black, Hispanic/Latinx, immigrant and low-paid residents.

For The Many NJ is eager to see these funds distributed to focus on three key priorities:

1. Immediate relief for workers and families
2. Transformational health, educational, and environmental infrastructure programs
3. Replenishment of the rainy day fund

**On behalf of For The Many NJ's member organizations, we recommend the following spending priorities because they would have the greatest impact and provide long-term benefits for communities most at risk of being left behind.**

These recommendations offer proactive steps to both advance equity and lay the groundwork for a more prosperous future for all New Jersey families.

### **Immediate Relief**

New Jersey's economic recovery has not been uniform, with more than 1 in 3 households still reporting difficulty paying usual household expenses as of May 2022, while many low-wage essential workers must still be compensated for COVID-related risks undertaken, especially those workers ineligible for federal aid.

Immediate relief for these households is critical to a successful and equitable recovery, including:

- **Expanded cash relief:** Fully support the Excluded New Jerseyans Fund, expand the Earned Income Tax Credit, create a Child Tax Credit, and reform the state's WorkFirst New Jersey program to get more money back in families' pockets.
- **Essential worker bonuses:** Pay \$2,000 bonuses to low-wage workers, starting with high-needs sectors such as health, education, child care, and food/grocery, to compensate for health risks and incentivize hiring/retention.
- **Creating generational housing stability:** Expand programs to support first-generation homebuyers and meet existing and future rental assistance claims to address the long-term effects of the pandemic.
- **Protecting child care:** Fund new infant-toddler child care seats and permanent pay-by-enrollment child care subsidy payments

### **Transformational Investments**

The pandemic revealed and worsened many existing gaps in New Jersey's existing systems in health care, education, and physical infrastructure, especially in Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and lower-income communities.

Transformational investments that address these gaps include:

- **Improving health equity:** Expand programs that directly address health access for low-income communities and Black and Hispanic/Latinx communities such as public health clinics and community health workers and a buy-in option for NJ Family Care, invest in a new medical facility for University Hospital, increase charity care payments, and invest in the behavioral health workforce.
- **Support hardest-hit students:** Expand special education, school-based behavioral health and support programs, and community schools funding to strengthen schools for students most hurt by pandemic disruptions.

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- **Transform environmental infrastructure:** Modernize sewer/wastewater infrastructure including removal of lead lines, fully end the raids on the Clean Energy Fund & NJ Transit's capital budget, and fund lead removal/remediation in homes.
- **Modernize state operations:** Make support and services accessible and accountable to diverse populations by upgrading agency operations with a state-wide language access plan and disaggregated data collection by race/ethnicity and gender.

## **Rainy Day Fund**

A strong rainy day fund can make the difference between falling back on drastic budget cuts and advancing equity with strong investments. The next time New Jersey faces a budget shortfall, which it will, lawmakers can avoid slashing programs relied on most by those who struggle hardest to make ends meet by making steady deposits into the rainy day fund.

The most effective way to make New Jersey more affordable for all is to create an economy that works for *everyone*. We believe our proposals for immediate relief, transformative investments, and a secure rainy day fund offer the best chance for an equitable recovery that lasts long into the future.

Respectfully,

32BJ SEIU  
 Blue Wave NJ  
 Clean Water Action  
 Environment New Jersey  
 Fair Share Housing Center  
 Health Professionals and Allied Employees  
 Housing and Community Development Network of NJ  
 Latino Action Network  
 League of Women Voters of New Jersey  
 Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry NJ  
 Make the Road New Jersey  
 New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
 New Jersey Citizen Action  
 New Jersey Policy Perspective  
 New Jersey Work Environment Council  
 New Jersey Working Families  
 NJ 11<sup>th</sup> For Change  
 NJ Work Environment Council  
 Our Children/Our Schools  
 Our Revolution New Jersey (state network)  
 Our Revolution Trenton Mercer  
 Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing  
 Wind of the Spirit, Immigrant Resource Center

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