

Governor Phil Murphy

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TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed S3585 and S3586 into law, expanding state housing aid for New Jersey's most vulnerable individuals and families. (<https://twitter.com/FirstLadyNJ>) (<https://twitter.com/GovMurphy>) (<https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice>)

"Every New Jerseyans deserves a safe and affordable place to live," **said Governor Murphy**. "With these new laws, we are acting on our commitment to build stronger communities and ensure that no one in New Jersey, especially the most vulnerable among us, spends a night without a place to call home. I commend the Legislature for working with me to combat these critical issues of homelessness and housing insecurity."

"This important legislation will help protect some of our state's most vulnerable residents from the indignity of homelessness. I commend the Legislature for their action to put this bill before Governor Murphy for his signature today," **said Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver**, who also serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs. "Coordinating the critical information, services and organizations that assist people experiencing homeless will be a powerful, strategic force to help fight this problem in New Jersey – because one person living on the street is one too many."

"Ensuring that New Jerseyans at-risk of homelessness get the assistance they need when they need it is among our top priorities," **said Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson**. "Emergency Assistance is a vital lifeline for those at-risk of homelessness, and this new legislation includes a clear emphasis on providing support to help people getting Emergency Assistance find stable housing. With this legislation, together with the work that we are doing in Human Services to make it easier for individuals and families to receive critical services in a timely way, New Jersey is taking big steps toward helping our most vulnerable residents."

S3585 establishes an Office of Homelessness Prevention in the Department of Community Affairs. The office will coordinate homelessness-prevention efforts among State and local agencies and private organizations and implement a statewide strategy to address homelessness. The legislation allocates \$3 million in funding for the new office. Primary sponsors of S3585 include Senate President Steve Sweeney, Senator Dawn Addiego, and Assemblywomen Lisa Swain and Eliana Pintor Marin.

S3586 allows individuals to receive additional lifetime emergency assistance under certain circumstances, subject to annual allocation limits. The legislation provides that emergency assistance benefits received by an individual more than seven years ago would not count toward the program's 12-month limit on benefits. The bill specifies that no individual may receive a cumulative total of more than 24 months of emergency assistance, excluding extensions available under current law. The bill also requires DHS to provide case management services to assist individuals who receive emergency assistance under the bill with finding more stable housing. Additionally, the legislation limits the total amount of assistance the state can distribute to people who had already received emergency housing aid to \$20 million. Up to \$5 million will be made available to cover the cost of the case management services required by the bill. Primary sponsors of S3586 include Senate President Steve Sweeney and Assemblymembers Raj Mukherji, Angela McKnight, and Nicholas Chiaravalloti.

The Department of Human Services is also taking action to make it easier for individuals and families who are either homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless to receive critical services and assistance in a timely way. The changes include updating guidance and proposing rule changes to make timely access to Emergency Assistance services easier for eligible individuals struggling to make rent, pay utilities or secure emergency shelter; making it easier for families experiencing homelessness to get child care; and easing barriers to enrollment for these

critical programs.

"The absolute limit on Emergency Assistance for the homeless is needlessly harsh. We have a moral responsibility to help those who face the frightening threat of being forced out of their homes and onto the streets," **said Senate President Steve Sweeney**. "This assistance can be a lifeline for the most vulnerable members of our communities who are experiencing hard times that make it all but impossible for them to meet basic needs, including food and shelter. There are homeless veterans suffering from PTSD, abused mothers with young children, and recovering drug addicts and alcoholics who find themselves out on the street and in need of our help."

"Today New Jersey takes action to assist those in our communities that need it the most," **said Senator Dawn Marie Addiego**. "With the establishment of the Office of Homelessness Prevention, greater resources will be available to those in need and more adequate funding will be accessible to agencies and organizations. The capability to properly evaluate the effectiveness of our efforts will allow us to better serve the thousands of New Jerseyans already homeless or in the crucial moments before they lose their homes."

"Although New Jersey has seen a dramatic decline in homelessness over the last decade, national statistics show a 9 percent rise in homelessness in the state since 2017," **said Assemblywoman Elana Pinto Mann**. "Now is the time to strengthen the various efforts happening around the state to prevent homelessness by joining these organizations and advocacy groups together. We can do more to protect our residents, especially families and veterans, from having their only option be to live on the street or in shelters. This will help us do just that."

"The Work First New Jersey program helps our most vulnerable residents in their time of need," **said Assemblyman Raj Mukherji**. "Without this assistance, many would be at risk of homelessness. Not only does the program give residents the means to get through hard times, but it also guides them in finding employment and activities to help them become self-sufficient."

"Life is unpredictable, and it is not uncommon for someone to face economic hardship more than once," **said Assemblywoman Angela McKnight**. "This legislation will help people regain access to emergency assistance benefits to get them back on their feet."

"This law will help our fellow New Jerseyans at risk of becoming homeless gain greater access to emergency assistance," **said Assemblyman Nicholas Chiaravalloti**. "Even for those with the best of means, no one is immune from experiencing life-altering circumstances like homelessness."

"The only way to effectively address homelessness is to engage in an intensive collaborative effort involving all stakeholders: state policymakers, providers of services to people who are homeless, and advocacy organizations," **said Assemblywoman Lisa Swain**. "Coordinating and funding programs to meet the needs of persons within New Jersey who are homeless or at risk for homelessness should always be a priority. If we are to tackle this issue in our communities throughout the state, this is where we begin."

"Congratulations to Governor Murphy for stepping up to mend a hole in the safety net for our most vulnerable neighbors," **said Diane Riley**, Executive Director of Supportive Housing Association of NJ. "Emergency Assistance only works when it can be there for people in critical moments when they need it. That can happen several times over the course of a lifetime especially for those who struggle with multiple challenges. We are so proud to work with our state leaders who understand how important every person is to our community."

"We commend Governor Murphy and legislative leaders for coming to a resolution that will help our most vulnerable residents," **said Staci Berger**, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ. "For New Jerseyans who are on the verge of homelessness and simply need temporary help, this will be a critical lifeline. We applaud the Governor and legislators for taking a step in the right direction to ensure our neighbors have a roof over their head and a safe place to rest at night."

"Our network cheers the efforts of Governor Murphy, Senate President Sweeney, and Assembly Speaker Coughlin on ensuring access to critical homelessness assistance and services for those in crisis," **said Renee Koubiadis**, Executive Director of the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey. "In our high-cost state, it is not uncommon for people to be housing insecure and find themselves needing temporary assistance more than once when rough times hit. Emergency Assistance is a crucial piece of the safety net to ensure a safe place to stay for our most vulnerable neighbors."

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