

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

GOVERNOR PHIL MURPHY

GOVERNOR MURPHY UNDERScores COMMITMENT TO BOLSTER HIGHER EDUCATION ASSISTANCE

Proposed Expansion of Educational Opportunity Fund and Tuition Aid Grants to Provide Affordability for More Students

Jersey City – Emphasizing his commitment to making higher education more affordable for New Jersey students, Governor Phil Murphy further outlined his goals during a roundtable discussion at New Jersey City University in Jersey City. The Governor’s proposed 2019 budget contains \$8.5 million for the expansion of Tuition Aid Grants (TAG) and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF).

“Our goal is to keep a college degree within reach for working families and those who come from economically disadvantaged areas,” **said Governor Murphy**. “These investments will ensure that students can continue to realize their dreams because no one should be deprived from getting an education based on where they’re from, or their background, or current economic status, or their abilities. This is a matter of fairness that will lead to a stronger future for our students and for New Jersey.”

Overall, Governor Murphy’s proposed Fiscal Year 2019 budget allocates \$2.4 billion in total appropriations for higher education, including funding for facilities and capital and represents an overall increase of \$69.9 million over last year’s budget.

“The Governor’s proposed increase in funding for these programs will assist students in need at our New Jersey institutions of higher learning, both two-year and four-year,” **said Acting Secretary of Higher Education Zakiya Smith Ellis**. “This will help to improve affordability and opportunity for those pursuing a higher education.”

Governor Murphy’s college affordability plan strengthens student assistance for Tuition Aid Grants (TAG) and the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) by \$7 million and \$1.5 million, respectively.

Proposed Fiscal Year 2019 TAG funding of \$432.9 million is projected to aid more than 67,500 students – an increase of nearly 3,500 TAG awards over the current year.

The \$7 million increase in funding for Fiscal Year 2019 will ensure continued access to need-based financial assistance for qualified students, by increasing award amounts provided to all qualified applicants at levels not to exceed 2 percent above those levels provided in the prior fiscal year.

In addition, the Governor’s proposed budget strengthens EOF by preserving the \$5 million the legislature put into the Fiscal Year 2018 budget for EOF and including an additional \$1.5 million of support to the EOF program.

After successive years of cuts, this is the first consistent commitment to this overwhelmingly successful program that has been made in almost a decade.

“I’m excited to be part of a discussion that leads to an increase in educational opportunities for students from economically challenged backgrounds,” **said Senator Sandra B. Cunningham, Chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee**. “Tuition Aid Grants and grants from New Jersey’s Education Opportunity Fund are based on financial need and also take into account the environments from which students are coming from. That’s why we have added \$8.5 million in funding for these grants in the proposed budget. TAG and EOF grants don’t just open the door to higher education, they can ensure that once a student is inside, they can stay and learn.”

“The Tuition Assistance Grant and the Equal Opportunity Fund programs serve low-income, first generation students in every county of the state,” **Assemblyman Nicholas A. Chiaravalotti said**. “Students which demonstrate a commitment, motivation and potential for success in higher education and beyond. Investment in these programs is imperative and I applaud Governor Murphy for prioritizing higher education and his increased proposed funding for both the TAG and EOF programs.”

"I applaud Governor Murphy's proposed expansion of TAG and EOF funding," said Assemblywoman Angela V. McKnight. "Knowledge is power; by investing in our youth who otherwise may not have been given an opportunity to attend an institution of higher education, we are assuring New Jersey creates an atmosphere for those brilliant minds to flourish."

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