

Governor Phil Murphy

First Lady Tammy Murphy Highlights Significant Investments in Maternal and Infant Health Initiatives

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NEWARK - First Lady Tammy Murphy today hosted a roundtable discussion to highlight the investments made in maternal and infant health initiatives in the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023) budget. The First Lady's initiative, Nurture NJ, aims to reduce New Jersey's maternal mortality by fifty percent over five years and eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes. Since its inception in 2019, Nurture NJ has made significant strides in addressing maternal and infant health care in the state of New Jersey. The FY2023 budget includes over \$58 million to support Nurture NJ programs and policies.

"These necessary investments will continue to address and combat the shocking numbers our state holds in maternal and infant mortality rates and racial disparities in health care," said **Governor Murphy**. "The health of our mothers and babies is of the utmost importance to each of the First Lady and me, as well as this Administration as a whole. Strengthening our maternal and infant health care systems will help us continue to build a stronger, fairer, and more equitable New Jersey for all families who call our great state their home."

"I am so grateful for the funding allocated to Nurture NJ in this year's budget, which will allow us to continue our work transforming our state into the safest and most equitable in the nation to deliver and raise a baby," said **First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Given New Jersey has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the nation exacerbated by unacceptable racial disparities for our mothers and our babies, we feel it is our moral imperative to continue this fight. I am thrilled to see Nurture NJ build upon the significant progress we have already made, better support mothers and babies during one of the most vulnerable times of their lives, and, through innovative policymaking, become the national gold standard for maternal and infant health."

In January of 2021, the First Lady unveiled the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan, with the goal of reducing New Jersey's maternal mortality by 50 percent over five years and eliminating racial disparities in birth outcomes. Since its inception, Nurture NJ has seen 43 pieces of maternal and infant health legislation signed by Governor Murphy, developed and implemented groundbreaking programs and policies, hosted annual Black Maternal and Infant Health Leadership Summits, and more – positioning New Jersey as a leader in fighting the maternal and infant health crisis.

The significant investments in the FY2023 budget will go towards several of the initiative's focus areas. Those investments include:

- \$20 million to support the development of our Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center
- Over \$17 million to continue developing the universal newborn home visitation program
- \$15 million to raise Medicaid rates for maternity care providers
- \$1 million to provide facilities grants to increase opportunities for midwifery education and training
- Over \$2 million to increase case management capacity in our Connecting NJ hubs
- \$2 million for a Nurture NJ public awareness campaign
- \$600,000 to create a database of maternal feedback on quality of care
- \$500,000 to expand the reach of the Colette Lamothe-Galette Community Health Worker Institute
- \$100,000 to develop a stillbirth prevention public health campaign

"Across New Jersey's health system there is a shared commitment to reducing maternal mortality, morbidity and disparities," said **Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli**. "Improving maternal and child outcomes will result in healthier families, and a stronger and healthier New Jersey."

"Under the First Lady's leadership and in partnership across government, Human Services continues its commitment to make New Jersey the safest state in the nation to give birth," said **Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. "We've taken steps to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage for a full year, end reimbursement for early elective caesarean-sections, increase reimbursement for midwives, begin covering doula services, and design a first of its kind episode of care model for maternity payments. The next step is to address overall reimbursement rates for maternity care. Under the new state budget, we are investing \$30 million in state and federal funds to raise fee for service Medicaid rates for maternity care providers for the first time in decades. These increases support prenatal, labor and delivery, and postpartum care, in turn increasing reimbursements for midwives and labor and delivery rates for doulas. This is another step forward in our shared goal - transformational change in a system that has failed too many mothers and babies, particularly those of color."

"Under Governor Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy's leadership, New Jersey continues to prioritize investments in programs, research, and services that end racial disparities in maternal and infant healthcare, and ensure that our state becomes the safest place in the nation to give birth and raise a family," said **NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan**. "Governor Murphy's Fiscal Year 2023 budget furthers that commitment by providing \$20 million for the creation of a Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center in Trenton, which will help transform maternal and infant health throughout the state, dismantle systemic inequities in our health care system, foster innovation, and ensure that mothers of color have access to quality care during and after pregnancy."

"We are on our way to making great strides in helping to address New Jersey's maternal mortality crisis," said **Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz**. "Our collaborative efforts with First Lady Tammy Murphy and the administration have demonstrated our commitment to making New Jersey a safer place for all of our mothers and children. The direct investments reflected in this year's budget will make a tangible impact in the health of our communities and allow us to expand what can be lifesaving services to even more residents."

"Expanding access to important resources and services for women and their infants is critical to overcoming the maternal and infant health crisis facing New Jersey," said **Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin**. "I am proud that this year's budget puts New Jersey families first with investments in improving health outcomes for new mothers."

"We have a responsibility to deliver equitable maternal and infant care throughout New Jersey," said **Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker**. "With this funding, we are making good on our commitment to address the maternal and infant health crisis, ensuring mothers throughout the State have greater access to the care they need before and after birth."

"As a public health expert and the founder of Life After 2 Losses, a nonprofit that 1) supports women, families, and communities coping with pregnancy loss and 2) empowers women, families, and communities with effective ways to prevent pregnancy loss; we know firsthand the importance of prevention when it comes to birth outcomes," said **Vu-An Foster, MPH**.

"As a community health worker, I can't tell you the endless number of stories I hear from mothers as far as needing assistance with prenatal care and postpartum care," said **Kashieka Phillips, community health worker and mother**. "With the help of Nurture NJ, we will be able to help spread the word about available doula services and the benefits that come with them."

"Our midwifery education prepares us not solely to be clinicians but to be there for our patients holistically. We are patient advocates and educators caring for people throughout their lifespans, including at their most vulnerable moments, the birth of their children," said **Raquel Reyes, DNP, WHNP, CNM, FN-CSA, CCE, CLC**.

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