

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Establishing School and Small Business Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program Fund

08/24/2021

***75% of Fund Dedicated to Schools, 25% of Fund Dedicated to Women and Minority Owned Small Businesses***

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S-3995) that establishes a fund administered by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) which will provide grants to schools and small businesses for the assessment, repair, upgrading, and replacement of HVAC systems and plumbing fixtures and appliances that fail to meet efficiency and health standards. The program is backed by \$180 million in American Rescue Plan funds appropriated in the FY 2022 Appropriations Act.

“The COVID-19 pandemic exposed an emergent need for the repair or replacement of critical items such as HVAC systems and plumbing systems in schools and small businesses across our state,” **said Governor Murphy**. “With the help of the Biden Administration and our Congressional delegation, as well as our partners in the Legislature, we are able to fund these much needed efforts to repair or replace these systems in the places that need it most. I am proud to sign this legislation that will address a longstanding need in communities in New Jersey.”

“Improving the energy efficiency of schools and small businesses will play an important role in meeting Governor Murphy’s goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2050,” **said NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso**. “In too many cases outdated energy infrastructure is not only expensive, it can also create an unhealthy indoor environment, particularly during the COVID pandemic. In addition to the health and economic factors, this program will provide a boost to the state’s clean energy economy by creating jobs and enhancing small businesses.”

Primary sponsors of S-3995 include Senate President Steve Sweeney, Senator Troy Singleton, and Assemblymembers Pamela Lampitt, Wayne DeAngelo, and Thomas Giblin.

“The importance of clean air and clean water takes on greater significance as we emerge from the coronavirus pandemic,” **said Senate President Steve Sweeney**. “As schools reopen and more businesses work to return to full operations, we have to do all we can to protect the health and safety of students and educators, as well as the customers and employees of small businesses that are so important to communities. Everyone needs to have confidence that the air they are breathing and the water they are using is clean and safe. This is an investment that will benefit schools and businesses for years to come.”

“As schools and businesses continue to reopen, there are concerns around whether they have adequate ventilation systems to meet health and safety requirements,” **said Senator Troy Singleton**. “This new law will provide the necessary funding assistance to allow these already cash-strapped businesses and school districts to upgrade their systems, which will improve the air our residents breathe and the water they drink overall.”

“Many small businesses do not have sufficient funding to replace or maintain HVAC and plumbing equipment. The pandemic has taken a tremendous toll on our small businesses and made maintaining efficient air and water systems a crucial part of business operations as they strive to protect both customers and employees,” **said Assembly sponsors Pamela Lampitt, Wayne DeAngelo, and Thomas Giblin, in a joint statement**. “This would not only help to reduce COVID-19 transmission in our state, but will also address long-term issues that will benefit our schools and small businesses for years to come. By updating antiquated air and water systems, we will keep our citizens safer and reduce costs for schools and small businesses throughout New Jersey.”

S-3995 requires the BPU to begin to solicit applications for grants by October 1, 2021 and begin to approve applications for grants by December 1, 2021, subject to the availability of funds. In order to expedite BPU's procurement of technical services to administer the program, the bill waives or modifies certain procurement requirements, including allowing the BPU to do the procurement itself and to modify timeframes and other requirements, and providing a shortened period for State Comptroller review. 75 percent of the funds will be allocated to schools, and 25 percent will be allocated to small businesses, which are defined as women and minority-owned businesses of a size and type to be specified by the BPU. In addition, 75 percent of all funds will be dedicated to schools and businesses in underserved communities, which the bill defines as school districts in which at least 75 percent of public school students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program. The grants made under the program will cover 75 percent of eligible costs, with grantees required to provide a 25 percent match.

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