

Governor Murphy Delivers 2024 State of the State Address January 9, 2024

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Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

"Making New Jersey More Affordable for More Families"

Lieutenant Governor Way.

Senate President Scutari — congratulations on being re-elected to another term, Mr. President.

Assembly Speaker Coughlin — who is now officially the longest-serving Speaker in New Jersey history!

Majority Leaders Ruiz and Greenwald. Minority Leaders Bucco and DiMaio. Members of the 221st Legislature, with special thanks to the bipartisan escort committee that walked me into this chamber.

Chief Justice Rabner, Associate Justices Patterson, Solomon, Pierre-Louis, Wainer Apter, Fasciale, and Noriega.

Members of the Cabinet. Senior staff.

Former Governors McGreevey, Codey, and Corzine. And let me say, to Gov. Codey: Congratulations on claiming your title as the longest-serving lawmaker in New Jersey's history.

Former Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno.

First Lady Tammy Murphy and three of our four children, Josh, Charlie, and Sam.

Distinguished faith leaders, veterans, our brothers and sisters in organized labor, special guests, friends.

And my fellow New Jerseyans.

As we begin our seventh year of partnership, New Jersey stands tall, resilient, and brimming with ambition.

Together, we have lived up to our promise to build a state that is not just stronger or fairer. We are building a state that is stronger and fairer.

Since the day I first put my hand on the Bible, we have been driven by one idea.

An idea that is big, inclusive, and unmatched.

An idea that we are working toward every single day.

To make New Jersey the best place anywhere to raise a family.

A state with greater affordability, lower taxes for working families, and the best possible quality of life.

A state where new industries are blooming and small businesses are booming.

A state with safer communities — and the best schools in the country.

And a state in which our fundamental rights — from voting rights to reproductive rights — and every right in between — are secure, without question.

We all know these are not simple times. As many of our neighbors tell us: this is an era of unease and uncertainty.



We live in a world rocked by two full-on wars, a surge in hate crimes, inflation, high interest rates, the aftermath of a pandemic, and the tail end of supply chain disruptions.

And in the face of these challenges, building a stronger, fairer, more inclusive New Jersey has never been more necessary.

So here is our task, today: to meet these hard times by working even harder.

To make life more affordable for more families.

And to live up to our New Jersey values — every step of the way — by working together.

Now, before I go any further, I want to acknowledge two of our brilliant, beloved colleagues who are — sadly — not with us today: the former president of the Board of Public Utilities, Joe Fiordaliso and my former partner in government, Lieutenant Governor Sheila Y. Oliver.

Both Joe's wife, Marilyn, and Sheila's brother, Charles, Sr., are here today. And I want to thank them both — deeply — for joining us.

Hey Chuck!

This is the first time I have addressed this chamber without Sheila by my side. By all of our sides.

This place is not the same without her. And not just because she stole the show with her style and poise.

But because she brought out the best of us. She was the best of us.

And in Sheila's honor — as well as Joe's — I ask that we observe a moment of silence.

Thank you.

As we strive to live up to their legacies, today, as I look around this room, I am filled with hope as we welcome many new faces who — just moments ago — took their oaths of office.

To each of you, let me say: Congratulations!

Especially to those legislators who some predicted would not be sitting here today. I guess being in a picture with me wasn't so bad after all.

In all seriousness, I want to mention two new colleagues in particular.

The pride of Monmouth County, Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul, who is now the first out female member of the LGBT community ever to serve in our Legislature.

And Essex County's very own Assemblyman Al Barlas — the first ever South Asian Republican to join our ranks.

Let us give 'em a big New Jersey welcome!

Their historic presence — in this building — speaks to the fact that we are bound by something far, far bigger than politics. Because no matter our disagreements or political views, we are members of the same New Jersey family. And, we are all proud to be Americans.

And, as leaders, we owe it to our children to hand them a state that can overcome any challenge and seize any opportunity.

So, as we begin a new legislative session, let us unite together to continue addressing the biggest challenge facing our families.

The fact that — for too many — the cost of living is too high.

But we can turn things around for our families.

I know that because we have done it before.

In the face of strong headwinds, we unleashed historic economic progress for New Jersey.

Since the last administration, we have more than doubled the growth rate of our state's economy.

And, at the same time, we have created nearly 200,000 jobs.

Jobs that pay well. Jobs that support a family. Jobs that give people the confidence that they can make their future in the Garden State.

And that is how we make New Jersey the best place in America to raise a family.

And as we look ahead, our job is to make sure that every family benefits from our economic momentum.

That is why, since the start of our administration, we have enacted 20 new tax cuts for middle-class families and seniors.

We created the most ambitious property tax relief program in our state's history: The ANCHOR program.

For the second year in row, it has put nearly \$2 billion back into the pockets of more than a million-and-a-half seniors and middle-class families.

For each household, that means up to \$1,750 in direct relief.

And that means more money in the pockets of people and veterans like Eddie Freeman, who is here with us today. Eddie is a former Sergeant in the U.S. Army who owns his home in Marlton.

A home that will be easier for him to remain in thanks to the ANCHOR program.

But we are not stopping there.

In partnership with Speaker Craig Coughlin, we are going to provide even more relief, with programs like Stay NJ, so more grandparents can stay close to their kids and their grandkids.

Additionally, with the help of the Speaker, Senate President Scutari, and all of our legislative partners — with the start of 2024 — we have hit another milestone in our mission to uplift working families.

As of this month, New Jersey's minimum wage has officially reached over \$15 an hour.

That is a promise kept! And, it will adjust for inflation. So even when costs rise — working people will not fall behind.

In fact, by the time I leave office, our minimum wage could be nearly double what it was when I was elected to this office in 2017.

But we need to keep moving forward.

Because making life more affordable for more families is our highest priority.

We need to recognize that financial security is a challenge in every facet of life.

When working parents walk through the grocery store — or shop for school supplies — it certainly does not feel like things are working in their favor.

People are worried — on a fundamental level — about their financial stability.

When I talk to families across our state, they tell me it is harder to make ends meet, harder to cover the costs of everyday necessities.

And they live with the fear that they are one bad diagnosis — or one missed paycheck — away from financial ruin. Or, that they may never be able to own a home — or send their kids to college.

I hear these voices. And I understand these fears.

Because long before I was Governor, I was a kid in a family that was middle class on a good day.

Those childhood struggles inform who I am today.

And that is why I fight the fights I do — because I have your back. I always have and I always will. And I will always fight to make sure every family has a fair shot in New Jersey.

I know I am called an optimist. Among other names.

Well, I am an optimist. Because all those years ago — when my family was struggling — our government was there

for us to provide a steppingstone, so my siblings and I could climb the ladder of opportunity.

For us, a little help meant a fair shot at the American Dream. Today, I believe we can – and we must – put the American Dream back in reach for anyone willing to work for it. That we can provide every family the same opportunities my family had.

And that is exactly what we will do – by addressing the drivers of high costs.

Starting with health care.

In the wealthiest nation in the world, nobody should have to worry about being able to afford critical health care services or a lifesaving medical procedure.

But that is the reality for too many.

Right now, in New Jersey, more than one in ten of our neighbors has medical debt in collections. That number is even higher in communities of color.

And we know that when someone is saddled with medical debt, they are less likely to seek medical care.

Because they worry about being harassed by predatory debt collectors, who will garnish their wages – or even seize their property.

So if they see warning signs about their health, they may avoid seeking help. And lives are needlessly put at risk.

That is dangerous – and it is wrong.

So we are taking action.

In last year's budget, we invested \$10 million into an innovative medical debt relief program. For every dollar invested, we can retire up to \$100 in debt – for tens of thousands of people.

With us today is Andrew Gregory. He is the husband of Casey McIntyre, a Tenafly native who – tragically – passed away from ovarian cancer this past November.

But before Casey's passing, she and Andrew did something heroic.

They agreed that Casey's last message to the world would be launching a fundraising campaign to pay off the medical debts of families struggling to get by.

In a matter of days, they raised nearly \$220,000. That is remarkable.

And we thank you, Andrew.

Your efforts are a lesson in empathy – and it is a lesson those of us in power must take to heart.

So let us work together to ensure our neighbors don't have to start a GoFundMe campaign just to afford potentially lifesaving health care.

Pulling people out from crushing medical debt is vital.

But so is protecting them from falling down that hole in the first place.

In that spirit, today, I am calling on our Legislature to enact a new package that will help families avoid being caught in a medical debt trap and require every medical bill to be clear and transparent.

And I am asking for the first part of this package to be named in honor of a brilliant public servant who was taken from us far too soon: The Louisa Carman Medical Debt Relief Act.

Louisa was a member of our Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency – and a major force behind this legislative package.

Tragically, we lost her in a car accident on New Year's Day. She was only 25 years old.

Louisa was talented. Incredibly thoughtful. And dedicated every day – as a member of our team – to making our health care system more accessible and more affordable for more people.

So with this legislative package, we can carry her mission forward – and help thousands of our neighbors avoid

falling into medical debt.

And as we strive to help our families feel more financially secure – when it comes to their medical bills – we are also making them feel more secure in their homes.

Under our administration, New Jersey has emerged as a national leader in expanding affordable housing.

However, today, we have a new challenge on our hands: New Jersey is popular!

People see our quality of life, our best-in-the-nation public schools, our top rankings in public safety, and they say: sign me up.

In fact, between 2021 and 2022, tens of thousands of New Yorkers made the move across the Hudson and set roots in New Jersey. It was the third-largest movement – from one state to another – in the entire country.

Of course, we welcome our new neighbors with open arms!

But if our population grows – while our housing stock remains steady – homeownership will be a luxury reserved only for those at the top.

That is untenable.

We need to put the dream of homeownership and affordable housing back into reach for working New Jerseyans.

New Jerseyans like Cristina Tone, who is here with us today.

When Cristina's son Christopher suffered a medical crisis, and was forced to move back home, they were able to keep a roof over their heads thanks to a recently built supportive housing project in Paterson.

Well today, to help many more New Jerseyans like the Tone family, we are committing to eliminating our state's shortage of hundreds of thousands of affordable housing units.

And, we will aim to build new housing options where they are needed most. In locations close to jobs, transit hubs, and Main Street businesses.

And to help accomplish this goal, I look forward to signing legislation – led by Senate President Scutari, Speaker Coughlin, Senator Troy Singleton, and Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez – to make it a whole lot easier to build more affordable housing – efficiently and equitably.

Our shared vision is simple. Ensuring that everyone raising a family in New Jersey has a safe, affordable place to call home.

And, in the spirit of lifting the financial burdens weighing on our families, let us redouble our commitment to bringing universal pre-K to all of New Jersey.

To ensure that every family – regardless of their economic status – can afford to send their child to a safe, enriching environment during the day.

So far, we have helped more than 14,000 of our state's children enroll in a pre-K program. And we are just getting started.

Because making New Jersey the best place to raise a family means ensuring every child has the support they need to reach their full potential. And every parent has the freedom to work, go to school, or take care of other family members.

Once again: this is how you build a state that is stronger and fairer.

And more affordable.

By preventing families from falling into a financial hole because they had a medical procedure – or by enrolling their kids in a pre-K program.

By helping our neighbors – particularly in communities of color and young families – generate long-term wealth.

By cutting taxes, raising wages, and putting more money back in peoples' pockets.

Each one of these instills confidence that you can not only live comfortably in New Jersey – but that you could not imagine living anywhere else.

And to go even further, let us continue rebuilding the pathways to prosperity in the form of good-paying, family-supporting jobs.

In New Jersey, we have always been the organized labor state.

And more than anything: We are pro-union because we are pro-middle class.

When workers are strong — middle-class families are strong. Period.

That is why, during our time in office, as union jobs have declined on a national level, here in New Jersey, we have actually increased — meaningfully — our unionized workforce.

Moreover, we are also taking the lead in helping our workers to develop new skills. So they can be more competitive in the labor market — and ultimately — earn higher wages.

We have doubled the number of apprenticeship programs in New Jersey. In fields like the life sciences, adult-use cannabis, home health care, and renewable energy.

These programs are equipping our workers with the tools they need to outcompete anyone.

And they are helping everyone — from displaced workers to recent graduates — find their ticket to a good-paying career.

And perhaps most importantly, they are creating opportunities for our state's veterans — who deserve every possible form of support and care we can provide.

Crucially, these programs are also helping address our lingering shortage of critical workers. Especially nurses and educators.

With us today is Sabrina Charles — who will be graduating, with Honors, from the Rutgers School of Nursing this May.

Sabrina is doing her part to help resolve our nursing shortage. And we are going to keep doing our part to support many others like her who are pursuing a career of service.

And with our Student-Teacher Scholarships we have already been providing financial support to more than 700 educators getting started in their careers.

In the years to come, we hope to support many more aspiring educators, like the one joining us today: Jason Williams.

He is a student at Kean University — and a member of the New Jersey Education Association — who plans to serve our state as a special education teacher. We thank you, Jason!

And just as we are creating opportunities for the workers who are so critical to our society — we are equally committed to creating opportunities for small businesses that are so critical to our economy.

Through our state's nation-leading pandemic relief and main street revitalization programs, we have invested nearly \$1 billion into helping our small businesses stay afloat.

These investments are not only helping our family-owned businesses survive in the short-term — but thrive in the long-term.

In fact, since we entered office, nearly 60,000 new small businesses have opened their doors in the Garden State.

And I can think of no better measure of our success than, recently, CNBC named New Jersey as the most-improved state in America for business.

With us today is Jose Flores, the General Manager of El Gordo — a chain of Peruvian restaurants that has been awarded more than \$60,000 through the New Jersey Economic Development Authority.

El Gordo was founded by a Latina Entrepreneur named Monica Velis, back in 1996 — just years after she immigrated to the United States. In the years since, it has become a community staple. In fact, they just opened their fourth location this past November — in Union County.

A little over a decade ago, Monica handed the keys to the business over to her daughter, Lizeth — who is now carrying this proud, family legacy forward.

Immigrants and small business owners, like Jose, Monica and Lizeth, are the backbone of New Jersey. We depend on them.

So let us make sure they can continue growing in the Garden State for generations to come.

And as we continue growing our economy in a stronger, fairer direction, it is essential that it grows from a durable foundation.

The fact is: it is hard to support the economy of tomorrow with last century's infrastructure.

That is why we are continuing to invest in the future of our transportation system at record levels.

Just this past November, we officially broke ground on the Jersey side of the Hudson Tunnel Rail Project.

One of the biggest policy failures in our state's history was when the last administration abandoned this project.

We are correcting that mistake. We are moving full speed ahead in completing the Hudson Tunnel Rail Project.

Now, what does this mean for you?

Well, first of all, this project will improve reliability for our entire rail system.

And in building these new tunnels, we are going to create roughly 70,000 good-paying, union jobs.

And, once these tunnels are built, to give you just one example, commuters on the Raritan Valley Line will be able to catch their one-seat ride in and out of Manhattan during rush hour.

Simply put: we are making it easier for families to get where they need to be — when they need to be there. So they can spend less time commuting, and more time with their loved ones.

Infrastructure is a perfect example of how the decisions we do — or do not — make will define the type of state we hand to our kids.

The sad fact is, for a long time, Trenton was content with ignoring the fiscal elephants in the room.

Our debt. Pension payments. Funding for public schools. On and on.

From day one, I have kept my promise that we would get our fiscal house in order.

And we have. We have fully funded our state pension three years in a row — and soon, we will make it four!

And, we have secured seven credit rating upgrades over the past six years. Let me put that in context.

The last time New Jersey's credit rating was upgraded — even once — was 2005. And the last time before that? 1977.

And this is bigger than fiscal jargon. Those upgrades mean we can put money back in the pockets of taxpayers.

Don't take my word for it. The Office of Public Finance says that these upgrades will save taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars over time — if the State remains on a fiscally responsible course.

In our complicated and ever-changing world, remaining on that responsible course has never been more important. And as long as I am governor we will.

But let us also recognize that responsible leadership is not only about economics.

It is also about defending our fundamental freedoms. That is the promise of "equal justice for all." That is the American promise.

But in recent years — we have seen many states abandon that principle.

We have seen a resurgent, radical, right-wing agenda that is hellbent on coming after our fundamental rights.

Voting rights. LGBT rights. Reproductive rights, and explicitly, the right to an abortion.

There is no sugarcoating it: Women's health care in America is in a state of crisis.

So when I talk about making New Jersey the best place to raise a family — that also means ensuring every woman

has the freedom to start a family on their own terms.

Here in Jersey, before that dreadful Dobbs decision came down, we codified the right to an abortion.

We restored funding for Planned Parenthood and family planning services — after eight years, before us, of zero funding.

And later this year — thanks to the leadership of Senator Shirley Turner and Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson — we will take another step.

As women will be able to walk into a New Jersey pharmacy and buy birth control. Without a prescription.

Here in New Jersey, we understand that as, A. Philip Randolph said, and I quote him, “Freedom is never given, it is won.” And we are winning freedoms for everyone.

Because if lawmakers in states like Florida and Texas think they can rip away rights from our fellow citizens, we’ve got news for them: not in the Garden State.

New Jersey will always be a safe haven for reproductive freedom. Period.

And guided by our values — today — I am asking you to join me in doing more to protect reproductive rights.

I am calling on our Legislature to pass a bill — sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz and Assemblywoman Shanique Speight — to scrap out-of-pocket costs for abortion procedures and protect patients and providers.

Let us do it before the summer.

We cannot lose any momentum in the fight for fundamental freedoms.

And defending freedom also means ensuring our children and families feel safe on our streets — and that they can live free of the fear of gun violence.

And on that front, we have made vital progress in New Jersey.

Just last week, we received word that — in 2023 — we saw our lowest number of shootings in nearly 15 years.

For those wondering how that could be, there is a simple explanation:

It is because we have provided historic funding to community-based violence prevention efforts — empowering residents in cities like Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, Trenton, and more.

It is because we have some of the strongest gun safety laws in the entire country.

And it is because we have some of the finest law enforcement officers in the United States — led by Attorney General Matt Platkin and the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan.

As a result, we are saving lives. And making New Jersey a safer place to raise a family.

At the same time, in improving public safety, we are also taking steps to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

But we have more to do. We must continue reforming a justice system that has failed Black and Brown communities for far too long.

That means undoing the damage of the failed War on Drugs. And helping our neighbors who have been unjustly thrown behind bars get back on track.

In that spirit — and in the next few months — I will be announcing a new clemency initiative that will ensure we live up to our promise as the state for second chances.

And reforming our criminal justice system strikes right at the heart of building a stronger and fairer New Jersey.

We need to reject the notion that compassion comes at the cost of vigilance.

Because today — thanks to our shared progress — New Jersey’s streets are safer — and we are building a more humane and effective justice system.

And of course, we are also defending the most basic freedom in our democracy: the right to vote.

Thanks to our administration, voting has never been easier in New Jersey. Under the leadership of the Lieutenant Governor – and Secretary of State – Tahesha Way, we have implemented automatic voter registration.

Instituted early in-person voting. Established online voter registration. And restored voting rights to more than 80,000 of our neighbors on probation or parole.

Just last week, I signed a bill – authored by Senator Andrew Zwicker – allowing 17-year-olds to vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the time of the general election.

And now, I hope we can take two more steps to invest in the long-term health of our state's democracy.

First – I continue to support passing same-day voter registration in New Jersey. Nobody should ever be denied access to the ballot box because they missed a deadline or forgot to send in paperwork.

Same-day voter registration will help prevent that. And it will empower every voter to have their say on Election Day.

Additionally, today, I am also asking the Legislature to send to my desk a voting rights bill that would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections.

This is a proposal inspired by two, bright young leaders here today: Anjali Krishnamurti and Yenjay Hu – the co-founders of VOTE16NJ.

And I want to thank Senator Brian Stack for his leadership on this issue as well.

I know, to some, this proposal may sound unconventional. But voting is a lifelong habit. And studies show that, if a person votes in one election – they are more likely to turn out in the next election.

So, encouraging our young neighbors to engage with democracy, is really about encouraging them to become lifelong voters.

Honestly, when I see young leaders like Anjali and Yenjay, I cannot help but think: is it any surprise that New Jersey has the best public education system in the country?

That is something we can all be proud of.

But it's a reputation we have to maintain, by listening to our students, educators, and parents – and putting their feedback into practice.

So this year, with their insights in mind, I hope to work with educators and legislators to improve literacy rates among our children.

We will be introducing new initiatives to teach our kids the fundamentals of reading – like sounding out letters and combining them into words.

It is simple: an emphasis on phonics in reading instruction is essential to the lifelong success of our children.

And it is essential to making New Jersey the best place to raise a child.

Increasing literacy rates makes New Jersey better.

Because reading books is always better than banning books.

And of course, as we invest in the future of our education system, we also need to make sure that – once our kids receive their diploma – they have a world of opportunity right in front of them.

That brings me to perhaps the most exciting aspect of our state's future: our leadership in new and emerging industries.

One of the hallmarks of our administration has been planting a flag in the industries of tomorrow.

Just look at where New Jersey stands when it comes to one of the most promising – and important – sectors of all: renewable energy.

We have set one of the most ambitious clean energy goals in the entire country.

And it is a goal we remain firmly committed to: 100% clean energy by 2035.

This is not just about doing what is right for our planet. This is also about creating a generation of good-paying jobs in the industries that will – literally – power our future, like offshore wind and solar.

And clean energy is just one example of how we are reclaiming our state's legendary legacy in innovation... to create economic opportunities for all.

It is that classic, Jersey spirit – of ingenuity and invention. And it is coming to life in new, inspiring ways – up and down our state.

You can see it in Fort Monmouth – where Netflix is building a state-of-the-art film production facility.

You can see it in Jersey City – where SciTech Scity is bringing people and companies together to launch new industries.

And you can see it in New Brunswick – where Bell Labs will soon begin a new generation of discovery in the Helix – a state-of-the-art hub for innovation.

In just about every category, from life sciences to fintech, from film and television production to offshore wind, New Jersey is paving the way forward.

Because innovation is both our heritage and our future.

So now, in 2024, it is time for New Jersey to lead the world – once again – in shaping a new, emerging realm with incredible promise: generative Artificial Intelligence.

Today, with AI, I believe we are at the dawn of a new era, much like we were thirty years ago, with the internet.

Think about it this way: if a Governor, back in 1994, talked about the transformative potential for the internet, you might have yawned.

Looking back, we have long since stopped yawning.

That is why I am talking about generative AI today. It is just as big – likely, a lot bigger.

And few places are better positioned to lead the way globally in AI than New Jersey. Truth is – we are already a leader in the field.

Just last month, in partnership with Princeton University, we announced plans to create a new AI innovation hub.

It will bring together researchers, industry leaders, thought leaders, world-leading academics, ethicists, and the public sector to advance developments in AI – and incubate groundbreaking discoveries.

And I want to give the CEO of the New Jersey Economic Development Authority, Tim Sullivan, and my Deputy Chief Policy Adviser, Carolyn Cannella, enormous credit for this partnership.

And beyond our partnership with Princeton, our state is already home to some of the most talented thinkers and innovators in the realm of AI.

Innovators working at the cutting-edge – like one joining us today – Brian Venturo, the co-founder of Coreweave – a global leader in AI infrastructure that began in a garage in suburban New Jersey.

And, in AI, we are also fostering a new generation of innovators – like Alex Chen, a senior – and Valedictorian – at Newark's Technology High School, who is headed to Carnegie Mellon this fall to study Computer Science, with an emphasis on generative AI.

Or, Andres Jaquez-Cruz – a first-generation college student, and QuestBridge scholar – also from Newark – on his way to MIT. He is already using AI through his studies in robotics.

In New Jersey, we stand alone when it comes to our potential to pioneer game-changing innovation.

We have more scientists and engineers per square mile than anywhere else on the planet.

We have some of the most renowned institutions of higher education in the world.

And we are the medicine chest to the world.

We may be a small state, but we have always thought and acted big.

And it is time to start thinking and acting big about generative AI.

So today, we are setting a bold new goal to galvanize innovators across the Garden State, and beyond.

Here in New Jersey, we are announcing an AI Moonshot.

63 years ago, President John F. Kennedy declared we would put a man on the moon by the end of the decade. Well, today, our state is lifting off to explore the furthest reaches of science in our time.

With New Jersey's AI Moonshot, our mission is for our state's top minds to pioneer a series of AI-powered breakthroughs, over the next decade, that will change the lives of billions for the better.

Our state government will be a catalyst for bringing together innovators and leaders to invest in research and development, and ultimately, establish New Jersey as the home-base for AI-powered game-changers.

From revolutionizing the discovery of new drugs and medical treatments, to creating new, personalized educational tools that can dramatically improve literacy rates and math skills, whatever the challenge, we are going to harness generative AI to unlock a new generation of possibilities.

With our state's talent, our resources, and our thriving innovation ecosystem, we are going to pioneer breakthroughs – not for the benefit of a small group of stakeholders – but for the benefit of everyone.

New jobs, new commercial opportunities – you name it.

And today, I am thrilled to share that New Jersey's Chief Innovation Officer – Beth Noveck – will help lead this endeavor as New Jersey's first-ever Chief AI Strategist.

Thanks to Beth – and our Chief Technology Officer, Chris Rein – we have already begun training thousands of our government workers to use generative AI to help New Jerseyans access benefits and services. And that scope will only grow in years to come.

One last thought as it relates to AI: I realize that, with new innovations, come new fears.

How many times have we been told that some new tech platform would “change the way we live” – only for it, seemingly, to make things worse?

So it is only reasonable of folks to ask: Why will AI be any different?

Well, here is how I see it: the future of generative AI has yet to be written. And New Jersey can be the author.

This is not just an economic opportunity for our families – it is, frankly, an imperative.

Because if we do not take the lead on AI, I guarantee you: someone else will.

Our nation's competitors – like China – are already working feverishly to own the future of this realm.

No one knows what the road ahead will look like.

But here is the road I envision.

It is a road that heads right down Route 1 – New Jersey's corridor of innovation – lined with the names of venerated institutions like Rutgers, Bell Labs, and Princeton.

I see a future in which New Jersey's top minds harness AI to discover new cures for debilitating diseases.

Giving health care workers more opportunities – not fewer.

I see a future in which our innovators use AI to discover new methods for combating climate change and caring for our ecosystems.

Creating jobs – not killing them.

And I see a future in which every student can receive a world-class education – tailored to their unique needs – instantaneously.

Uplifting educators – not replacing them.

So, to every innovator out there, to the visionaries who believe generative AI has the potential to improve the lives of billions, for all those dreamers hungry to usher in a new age of hope and prosperity, consider this your invitation: join us in New Jersey!

And to everyone in New Jersey — especially those who are understandably skeptical about what AI could mean for them, to our working families — who are anxious about the future, and who have been let down before — here is my message to you:

We are going to make generative AI work — not for the few — but for you.

Because that is how we make New Jersey the best place to grow up, settle down, and raise a family.

Together, we are doing the hard work to get through hard times.

Together, we are building a New Jersey that is better today and brighter tomorrow.

A state with lower taxes, and higher wages, for working families.

A state where nobody goes bankrupt because they sought life-saving health care.

Where everybody has a safe, affordable place to call home.

Where every child can receive the world's best education — from pre-K through college.

Where people's freedoms — from who you love, to how you worship, to when you start a family — are protected.

And a state where the industries of tomorrow take root — and new opportunities bloom for every worker, of all backgrounds.

Because, from day one, the vision has been to grow New Jersey from the bottom up and the middle out.

To live up to the promise of equity, opportunity, and hope for all.

Together, we are going to continue facing our toughest challenges with honesty and optimism.

And we are going to leave our kids a state that is better than we found it.

A state where you can afford to live your working years — and your golden years.

A state that affords you every opportunity in the world.

And — most of all — a state that is more affordable for more families — simply, a New Jersey that is the best place anywhere to raise a family.

Let me be absolutely clear about the state of our state: New Jersey is stronger and fairer than ever before.

Thank you all so much. May God bless you and your families.

And may God continue to bless the great State of New Jersey and the United States of America.

Governor Phil Murphy

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