

Governor Phil Murphy

Key Stakeholders and Advocates Come Out in Support of First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan

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TRENTON – Key stakeholders and advocates expressed their support for First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan (<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562021/approved/20210125a.shtml>) that launched yesterday, January 25:

"Although the infant mortality rate in New Jersey has been steadily decreasing for several years, black infants mortality continues to be much higher than any other racial or ethnic group in the state," said **Senator Ron Rice, Chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus**. "Not much has been done to address this, however, nobody has put in the work, reached out to communities of color and brought together all the important health experts and activists like First Lady Tammy Murphy has over the past few years. We appreciate the work she has done to improve maternal health in New Jersey, especially in Black and Brown communities. I believe her efforts will effectively promote maternal health equity, and especially, decrease the black infant mortality rate in this state."

"I am encouraged by the release of the strategic plan and I look forward to working alongside the First Lady to bring its action items to fruition," said **Senator M. Teresa Ruiz**. "We have been strong legislative partners and have developed several policies to address the racial disparities we see in maternal mortality rates here in New Jersey. I am confident that together we can continue to make a positive impact that will ultimately save lives."

"With First Lady Tammy Murphy as a vocal champion, New Jersey is leading the way in this strategic approach to ensuring that all mothers and babies have every opportunity for good health," said **Cathy Bennett, CEO of the New Jersey Hospital Association**. "NJHA and the state's 49 birthing hospitals share in this collective resolve to provide safe and equitable care and to ensure that mothers are educated, empowered and heard as partners in safe, successful births."

"As a practicing OBGYN, Professor, and Obstetrical Director at an urban teaching hospital, I am a direct witness to racial disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes," said **Lisa Gittens-Williams, MD, Board Member of the New Jersey Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**. "I commend the First Lady and Nurture NJ for placing women and their communities at the center of an innovative, action-oriented approach to problems that have plagued our society for far too long. It will take all of us working together to ensure success. I, along with my colleagues of the New Jersey Section of ACOG, will work in any way possible toward realizing the goals of the plan and moving New Jersey towards a *more perfect* health care system and a new reality for our patients."

"As Chair of the New Jersey Section of ACOG and President of the New Jersey OBGYN Society, I want to thank First Lady Tammy Murphy and her staff for groundbreaking work and steadfast dedication to eradicating the societal conditions that have resulted in racial disparities in our health care system; most critically for our patients, with respect to issues of maternal mortality and morbidity," said **Thomas Westover, MD, Chair of the New Jersey Section of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists**. "Our membership stands with you as you embark on the mission of engaging all sectors of the state in achieving the objectives of the strategic plan. We look forward to our continued dialogue and working relationship moving forward."

"The New Jersey Chamber of Commerce applauds First Lady Tammy Murphy for bringing to light the issue of maternal and infant mortality in NJ and especially the high rate of deaths among black women and infants in our state," said **Laura M. Gunn, Director, Government Relations, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce**. "The NJ Chamber believes it is a moral imperative that the business community and all New Jerseyans support the First Lady's stated goal of reducing New Jersey's maternal mortality by 50% over the next five years and eliminate the racial disparities in birth outcomes. The NJ Chamber recently announced an initiative to support diversity and equal economic opportunity across New Jersey's business community and we believe ensuring quality health care is a foundational necessity in making equal opportunity a reality."

"The New Jersey Affiliate of the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) is grateful for all of the efforts to develop the Nurture NJ Strategic plan, which supports policy measures that would increase access to safe, high-value midwifery care," said **Julie Blumenfeld, CNM, President of the NJ Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives**. "This initiative will expand evidence-based, high-value maternal health care and improve maternal and newborn health outcomes during a time in which New Jersey faces a shortage of high-quality maternal health providers and significant race-based disparities in maternal and infant outcomes."

"We thank First Lady Murphy for highlighting and working towards rectifying the racial disparity that exist in New Jersey surrounding the birth of a child," said **Pamela Brug, MD, MS, Vice President of the New Jersey Black Women Physicians Associations**. "It has also allowed the amplification of the work of others who have worked to address this issue for years. We look forward to continuing to work with Nurture NJ to assure this is an ongoing and lasting impactful initiative."

"MomsRising applauds the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan," said **S. Nadia Hussain, Senior Campaign Director, MomsRising**. "This is a critical step forward to address the devastating racial disparities in maternal health outcomes Black people who give birth in our state have experienced for generations. With the unveiling of this plan, we move closer to ensuring that everyone who gives birth in NJ has access to a safe and healthy pregnancy, birth, and postpartum experience, with the opportunity to watch their child grow and thrive alongside them."

"For too long, women across the Melinated Spectrum have felt voiceless and invisible when it came to their care across the phases of conception, but thankfully through the Office of the First Lady, we have finally found a space that values our voices," said **Jaye Wilson, CEO/Founder, Melinated Moms**. "We know the road to maternal health equity is not easy, but Melinated Moms is excited to be a part of the solution with Nurture NJ"

"As a community-based organization created to increase opportunities for health and wellness and to improve health outcomes for women and children in Trenton and Mercer County, Children's Futures is ecstatic to support First Lady Murphy's initiative," **said June Gray, Director of Family Support Interventions at Children's Futures.** "The development of a comprehensive strategic plan designed to reduce New Jersey's maternal and infant mortality rate by fifty percent and to eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes is crucial. It sets the priority necessary to effectively create the change strategy needed to save lives. We commend First Lady Murphy for the insight and fortitude she exemplifies as she works to ensure equity in maternal and infant care and to reduce the embedded institutional racism that contributes to the health disparity experienced by many of New Jersey's vulnerable citizens. The work done to create the plan and the work that will be done to implement the plan will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the trajectory of New Jersey's health care outcomes. Collectively we can make a difference."

"The Tara Hansen Foundation is incredibly proud of the state of New Jersey and its leadership," **said Ryan Hansen, Founder of the Tara Hansen Foundation.** "Over the past few years we have become trailblazers for improved maternal health care, protecting women and empowering their voices throughout the birth process. Our strides have outpaced even my own vision for what I thought could be done and I couldn't more proud."

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