

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Bill Establishing Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center

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New Center will Build on and Sustain the Work of First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ Initiative

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy, joined by First Lady Tammy Murphy, today signed S3864, known as the “New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center Act.” The bill will create the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority, which will oversee the highly anticipated New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center in Trenton.

The one-of-a-kind Authority will be governed by a 15-member Board and shall employ an appointed President and Chief Executive Officer who will hire accompanying staff. The Board will adopt recommendations for action to reduce maternal mortality, morbidity, and disparities from the New Jersey Maternal Care Quality Collaborative (NJMCQC). The Board also will be required to coordinate with a Community Advisory Committee to support and inform the work of the Authority. The 11-member community advisory committee will represent diverse community groups with relevant experience as providers or recipients of maternal, infant, and child health services.

“I am thrilled to sign today’s bill that officially establishes the government authority that will build the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center right here in Trenton. This Center will both drive policy and provide badly-needed maternal health care services in Trenton, which currently does not have a birthing center and suffers from some of the widest racial disparities in maternal and infant deaths,” **said Governor Murphy**. “I am tremendously grateful to Tammy for her dedication to solving this maternal health crisis. She has been shining a light on this issue, and bringing attention to the hard truths. Today marks another important step in our ongoing efforts to protect the health of mothers and newborns.”

“We all feel an instinctive need to protect our mothers and babies so that every family begins its life together in health, wellness and joy,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. “This center will be an incubator for research and development, an academic and perinatal workforce training center, a data collaborative, and so much more. It will offer comprehensive clinical services to serve moms before, during, and after pregnancy and will not only help us transform the maternal and infant health landscape in New Jersey, but will make our state the national model and gold standard for maternal care. I am grateful and enormously proud to see New Jersey commit to leading this effort for generations to come through the work of this center.”

In 2019, First Lady Tammy Murphy launched Nurture NJ, a statewide program committed to reducing the maternal and infant mortality epidemic in New Jersey and ensuring equitable care among women and children of all races and ethnicities. In January 2021, the First Lady unveiled the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan – a blueprint to reduce New Jersey’s maternal mortality rate by 50 percent over five years and eliminate racial disparities in birth outcomes. Today’s bill was inspired by the Strategic Plan, which recommended the establishment of a “Center in Trenton that focuses on innovation and research in maternal and infant health through partnerships with the state’s academic, funder, business, and faith communities.”

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 17 Family Festivals bringing resources to more than 6,800 families statewide, and more – positioning New Jersey as a national leader in fighting the maternal and infant health crisis.



The work of Nurture NJ has proven successful in advancing its mission of making New Jersey the safest, most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby. Ranked 47th in the nation for maternal and infant mortality when Governor Murphy took office in 2018, New Jersey moved up to 29th in America's Health Ranking just last month.

In the recently signed Fiscal Year 2024 budget, the First Lady's Nurture NJ initiative received nearly \$60 million to support maternal and infant health programs and policies. \$32 million of that total will go towards the Center, including the \$2.22 million allocated in the bill.

"We have high quality hospitals all over New Jersey, yet women have a greater chance of dying due to childbirth here than they do in 46 other states," **said Senate Majority Leader Ruiz**. "Black women are seven times more likely to die of pregnancy-related complications. That is absolutely unacceptable and has gone on for far too long. Women of color deserve quality care. In some instances, it is a matter of life and death which is why it is critical that we offer the utmost care through the creation of this Center."

"New Jersey has one of the widest racial disparities for both maternal and infant mortality rates. Trenton is among the cities with one of the highest rates of Black and Hispanic infant mortality, while also having the least access to quality healthcare. Only 47 percent of mothers in Trenton receiving prenatal care in their first trimester," **said Senator Turner**. "There has to be a greater emphasis on the maternal health of women of color, and the establishment of this center is a significant step in increasing access to efficient and effective maternal health care."

"New Jersey's Black and Brown communities are in a maternal and infant mortality crisis. It is unacceptable that persisting racial disparities continue to plague cities across New Jersey, including our State capital," **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. "We must do more for equity in health care, dismantle structural barriers and ensure we are equipping our residents with the high-quality services they need to thrive. A Maternal and Infant Health Authority will build on our work to make New Jersey the safest place to start and raise a family by directly supporting research, development and innovation that will improve outcomes for new mothers and their babies."

"Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy have been leading champions for maternal and infant health; Trenton mothers and newborns will receive outstanding care as a result of the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center. The Murphy administration is rightly addressing systemic disparities in prenatal and postpartum care that Black and Brown mothers receive; with a shared vision for a brighter and healthier future, there is so much that we can accomplish together. After the closure of St. Francis Hospital, this new Center marks the start of a new chapter in the health ecosystem of our Capital City, which will create jobs and improve health outcomes for Trentonians," **said Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora**.

"I live in Trenton and I am so very glad that Governor Murphy will sign today a bill making a first-in-the-nation state Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center," **said Jocelyn Hansen-Dicintil, a participant of Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Body & Soul prenatal health education program**. "This Center is so important for moms, birthing people and families in Trenton and Mercer County because The Center will offer medical care to local folks and educational programs like Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Body & Soul with Miss Shahera that directly help moms like me."

Governor Phil Murphy

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