

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Second Round of Medical Debt Elimination, Totaling \$120 Million in Debt Abolished for 77,000 New Jerseyans

Posted on - 10/15/2024

TRENTON – Nearly two months after effectuating the first round of medical debt abolishment through the State’s partnership with Undue Medical Debt, Governor Phil Murphy today announced that 77,000 eligible individuals and families across New Jersey are set to benefit from the elimination of an additional \$120 million in medical debt. Governor Murphy sat down with Andrew Rose Gregory, who was a special guest at the 2024 State of the State Address, to discuss the announcement. Andrew and his wife, Casey, partnered with Undue and raised \$1.1 million following her passing to help eliminate medical debt for others. The video is available [here](https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/76yzkab) (<https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/76yzkab>).

By leveraging approximately \$900,000 in American Rescue Plan funds, Undue has worked with the Atlantic Health System to identify and purchase qualifying, unpayable medical debts. Impacted residents may have all or some of their debts abolished as part of the Governor’s mission to make health care more affordable and accessible. Through the State’s partnership with Undue, \$220 million in medical debt has been eliminated for 127,000 New Jersey residents so far.

“Investing in affordable and accessible health care allows residents to prioritize their well-being without having to take on the significant burdens of medical debt, which has long served as a debilitating barrier to receiving the life-saving care and services they deserve,” **said Governor Murphy**. “That is why our Administration has taken action to both protect residents from accumulating debt and eliminate existing debt so that New Jerseyans can focus on what matters most: their health. Today’s announcement marks a monumental step forward and builds upon our efforts to create a health care system that relieves financial constraints and ensures quality, comprehensive care is within reach of every New Jerseyan.”

“With Governor Murphy’s persistent focus on health care affordability and access for New Jerseyans, we are pleased to announce another round of medical debt abolishment for tens of thousands of residents and families,” **said Shabnam Salih, Director of the Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency**. “Today’s announcement is lifting the burden of \$120 million in debt off their shoulders, helping to bring some peace of mind and comfort next time they have to see a doctor or visit the hospital for care.”

Earlier this year, the Governor signed the [Louisa Carman Medical Debt Relief Act](https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/nzzzkab) (<https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/nzzzkab>), which safeguards New Jersey families from accumulating medical debt, protects against predatory medical debt collectors, and prohibits the reporting of medical debt to credit reporting agencies. New Jersey is a leading state in consumer protection policies and supports for residents, being [one of only five states](https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/3r0zkab) (<https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/3r0zkab>), in the nation that both prohibits medical debt reporting to credit agencies and has allocated funding to provide residents with direct medical debt relief.

“We’re proud to partner with the state of New Jersey, Governor Murphy and Atlantic Health on this impactful medical debt abolishment that follows closely on the heels of the initial \$100 million of medical debt already erased,” **said Undue Medical Debt CEO and president Allison Sesso**. “New Jersey is a great example of a state that’s erasing medical debts weighing down its most financially burdened residents while also taking legislative action to lessen the burden of medical debt overall.”

“As Casey and I prepared for her to die in home hospice, we decided that after her death we would raise money to forgive others’ medical debt in her honor. We were keenly aware of how lucky we were that our finances hadn’t been demolished by America’s health care system during Casey’s long and arduous treatment. Casey’s corporate insurance through her work as a publisher at Penguin Random House had been our shield. But we had met so many other patients and families that were not so lucky as us, and had gone into debt or even denied care because of a lack of insurance,” **said Andrew Gregory**. “In the last weeks of her life, Casey and I often listened to the Stevie Wonder song Come Back as a Flower: I wish that I could come back as a flower / as a flower / to spread the sweetness of love. As news of Casey’s death, and her wish to forgive others’ medical debt, spread across the world after she died, her campaign raised \$1.1 million, forgiving almost \$45 million with at least \$65 million more of un-payable medical debt still slated to be relieved. She is no longer with us but I still say to her, Casey, Casey, you have come back as a flower.”

There is no application process for medical debt relief. Undue works with hospital systems across the country to purchase large, bundled portfolios of past-due medical debt belonging to those least able to pay for pennies on the dollar. Instead of trying to collect, Undue erases the debt.

“When I received my letter [notifying] me that my medical expenses were covered, I felt so blessed and happy. I’m a single mom; I had to take a



leave of absence so that I could have surgery and I have no way to pay my medical bills. I work so hard in this country, but it is really difficult to [pay] for my house and bills without any assistance. Thank you so much, Governor Phil Murphy," **said Brunilda from Newark, NJ**, one of almost 50,000 New Jerseyans to have medical debt abolished this August.

"Thank you for helping. I lost my job and then got terribly sick. I couldn't afford medication, couldn't afford to pay rent and my bills were coming in back-to-back. I'm trying to get my financial situation back together and this really does help me. Thank you," **said Angela from Dover, NJ**, one of almost 50,000 New Jerseyans to have medical debt abolished this August.

"Like many families throughout the United States, I worked a job for 25+ years that did not offer health benefits. I often had to make a strategic decision about whether my illness or injuries were worth visiting the hospitals or doctor for. Living off of minimum wage, taking care of my ailing mother, paying rent and other expenses – it was just impossible for me to pay my hospital bills. Even with expensive health insurance, high co-pays make it difficult for many American families to [afford care]. Thank you, Undue, for relieving me of this burden. For once, [I felt] great joy finally receiving some good news in the mail!" **said Antoinette from Jackson, NJ**, one of almost 50,000 New Jerseyans to have medical debt abolished this August.

Those who qualify for medical debt relief are either four times or below the federal poverty level or have medical debts that equal 5% or more of their annual income. These are the only criteria for relief. For this round of debt abolishment, Undue worked with Atlantic Health System to identify unpaid medical debts that qualify for erasure. This is a one-time abolishment to help remove the financial and emotional burden of unpayable medical debts. Medical debt relief is source-based, depending on community-minded providers like hospitals who choose to engage.

Those benefiting from medical debt relief will receive an Undue branded letter in the mail beginning Thursday, October 17, 2024. Learn more about Undue [here \(https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/jk1zka\)](https://t.e2ma.net/click/7iwlpm/nrddit/jk1zka).

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about\)](#)

[Lt. Governor Tahesha Way \(/governor/admin/lt\)](#)

[In memoriam of Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt-sheila-y-oliver\)](#)

[Senior Staff \(/governor/admin/staff\)](#)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet\)](#)

[Office of Climate Action and the Green Economy \(/governor/climateaction/\)](#)

[Office of Equity \(/governor/admin/equity/\)](#)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency \(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](#)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca\)](#)

[New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission \(https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/\)](https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](#)

[Governor's Fellows Program \(/governor/admin/fellows\)](#)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](#)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](#)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](#)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](#)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](#)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](#)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562024/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562024/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

[Privacy Notice \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

(//nj.gov/opra/)

(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

(https://tech.nj.gov/)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2024
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000