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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – As the Labor Day holiday approaches, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) is celebrating the [nearly 4.4 million New Jerseyans](#) whose hard work and contributions to their communities are the backbone of a vibrant and thriving economy. Under the Murphy Administration, NJDOL has been dedicated to ensuring these workers receive the support and opportunities they deserve, implementing policies that safeguard their rights and build a resilient economic foundation for all residents, including a higher minimum wage and Earned Sick Leave.

“Each Labor Day we celebrate the contributions of hardworking New Jerseyans,” said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. “This year it is particularly special as we honor a record number of workers. Importantly, these workers are enjoying historic protections and benefits after almost eight years of focus on creating a stronger and fairer economy. These groundbreaking policies have prioritized the dignity, well-being, and security of every worker in our state, making New Jersey a beacon of labor rights and economic justice.”

WORKER BENEFITS

Shortly after taking office in January 2018, the Governor [enacted paid sick leave](#), making New Jersey the 10th state to require employers to provide paid time off to full- and part-time workers. The [Earned Sick Leave Law went into effect in October 2018](#), when workers began earning one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked with the ability to earn 40 hours per year.

In February 2019, [legislation was signed to gradually increase the state's minimum wage](#), which was just \$8.60 per hour when Governor Murphy took office. New Jersey's minimum wage [rose to \\$10 per hour](#) in July 2019, and [exceeded the \\$15-per-hour target](#) at the start of 2024. The state minimum wage is currently \$15.49 per hour and will continue to be set based on any increase in Consumer Price Index (CPI) data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Paid family and medical leave benefits were [expanded effective July 2020](#). Under both the Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) and Family Leave Insurance (FLI) programs, eligible workers can now receive up to 85 percent of their average weekly salary, an increase from two-thirds. Family Leave benefits were extended to 12 consecutive weeks per year, up from six weeks, and intermittent leave increased to 56 days from 42 days.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) AND MODERNIZATION EFFORTS

Unemployment Insurance (UI) proved to be a critical lifeline during the pandemic, with NJDOL distributing about \$40 billion in related benefits to 1.6 million workers in the first 21 months of the global emergency.

In December 2021, [NJDOL announced](#) it was chosen by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and U.S. Digital Service (USDS) as a pilot state for modernization and improvement of the federal UI system. The goal of the Claimant Experience Pilot was to design an application system that provides equitable and timely access to unemployment benefits for eligible workers.

A [new UI intake application](#) debuted in May 2024, showcasing a simpler and more intuitive process, a reduced number of questions, and conditional logic, making it more accessible and user friendly. In addition, a new cloud-based phone system put in place in 2024 allows for self-service and dramatically reduced callback times from up to an hour to just 90 seconds. With customer experience and equity at the forefront, NJDOL has applied these principles to make improvements throughout the department.

UI TRUST FUND RECOVERY

Recently, the UI Trust Fund reached over \$3 billion for the first time since 2001. With contributions exceeding projections, the [UI tax rate paid by businesses was reduced](#) as of the new fiscal year starting July 1, 2025, saving employers an estimated \$300 million. This signals the continued recovery from pandemic demands and the strength of the state's overall employment picture, as well as validates NJDOL's efforts against the

illegal misclassification of employees as independent contractors, stripping workers of the state provided protections and benefits available to employees.

WORKER PROTECTIONS

In addition to enhanced benefits like an increased minimum wage and expanded paid family and medical leave programs, the Department has emphasized the importance of ensuring workers can access these and other rights. To strengthen these efforts, Governor Murphy [signed a package of six laws](#) in January 2020 and [another four in July 2021](#) to fortify the state's ability to address misclassification.

Under statute, the Office of Strategic Enforcement and Compliance (OSEC) was created within NJDOL. OSEC implements the [Workplace Accountability in Labor List \(WALL\)](#), a public record of employers who fail to address outstanding liabilities for violations of wage, benefit, or tax laws. Currently, there are 289 businesses on the list owing \$26.3 million either directly to their workers or to the state for unpaid taxes or contributions. To date, NJDOL has recovered \$692,453.85 in outstanding liabilities from businesses that have been posted to The WALL or have been warned their business would be added to The WALL if they did not resolve their outstanding liabilities.

Furthermore, the legislation simplified the process of identifying misclassified workers and empowered the Department to implement stop-work orders at worksites where misclassification is detected. NJDOL has issued 201 stop-work orders since Governor Murphy enhanced this authority in 2019.

A first-of-its-kind misclassification penalty that has assessed more than \$11 million to be paid directly to over 13,000 misclassified workers since implementation in September 2021.

[New Jersey Wage Hub](#) was [released in August 2023](#) to help public contractors and contracting public bodies track public works projects and certified payrolls, as well as submit annual reports under the [Diane B. Allen Equal Pay Act](#), which went into effect in July 2018.

[MyWorkingPapers.nj.gov](#) launched in June 2023 to streamline the working papers process for minor workers, caregivers, and employers, moving the entire process from paper to online while also allowing NJDOL to better protect young workers and inform them of their rights.

The [Temporary Workers' Bill of Rights](#) went into full effect in August 2023, expanding the rights and protections afforded to many temporary laborers. Effective July 2024, the [Domestic Workers' Bill of Rights](#) established a broad range of rights and employment protections for domestic workers who provide in-home services to private households. A new law governing [pay and benefits transparency](#) went into effect in June of this year.

NJDOL has assessed over \$128 million in back wages for workers since the start of 2018. Investigations have resulted in justice for workers while protecting honest employers and state contributory programs from unlawful practices that compromise fair labor standards. Notable cases include a [\\$100 million settlement](#) with Uber Technologies Inc. and a subsidiary for misclassifying hundreds of thousands of workers, a [\\$7.75 million agreement](#) with Chipotle Mexican Grill to resolve alleged widespread and persistent violations of the state's child labor laws, an agreement with a luxury car transport company that returned [\\$364,000 in unpaid wages](#) to misclassified workers, and 27 stop-work orders issued to Boston Market locations statewide, resulting in [\\$630,000 returned to over 300 workers](#).

WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY

Despite encompassing a global pandemic, the [Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses \(SOII\)](#) covering 2017 to 2023 reported a decline in the rate of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses across both public and private sectors in the state.

This is reflective of NJDOL's programs and services that help reduce safety risks in the public and private sectors, including the [Occupational Safety and Health On-Site Consultation Program](#), which offers free workplace hazard evaluations, and the [Occupational Safety Training Program](#), which provides no-cost assistance in creating customized training programs on how to maintain safe and healthy work spaces. In Federal Fiscal Year 2024, New Jersey provided the most [Public Sector On-Site Consultations](#) in the country.

In addition, NJDOL has initiated targeted programs like [beach worker](#) and [crossing guard](#) safety, and stood up mandated programs such as the Governor's [Executive Order No. 192](#) to expand worker health and safety protections during the COVID-19 pandemic and the [Panic Device Law](#), which helps protect housekeeping and room service staff who work alone in guest rooms.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND APPRENTICESHIP

NJDOL expanded its career services to be available online, over the phone, and in person, allowing department staff to reach more than 460,000 workers directly, while jobseekers accessed self-services well over 4 million times throughout the course of the Murphy Administration.

[MyCareer.NJ.gov](#), which [went live in March 2024](#), has become an essential tool for career seekers and has been recognized as a best-in-class AI-powered recommendation engine generating recommendations on job openings, training opportunities, and career transitions. In 2021, [SkillUp New Jersey](#), a free virtual training program, became available to all state residents who want to upgrade their skills and train for certifications.

Since 2018, the state has invested over \$100 million to grow apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship, and work-based learning programs, resulting in a 148 percent increase in apprenticeship programs and a 52 percent rise in active apprentices.

Investment in youth programs nearly tripled, reaching \$14.4 million since 2018. The Summer Youth Work Experience Program expanded to offer more opportunities for young people across the state to gain employment and valuable work experience. The New Jersey Youth Corps, which [celebrated its 40th anniversary](#) this year, broadened its scope to include mental health and wellness instruction, thereby increasing access to mental health services and support for young people. Additionally, the Bridges to Employing Youth initiative was launched to address the career development needs of specific youth populations, including those with disabilities, in foster care, involved with the justice system, and pregnant or parenting.

The [Fund My Future](#) program stemmed from recommendations by Governor Murphy's [Future of Work Task Force](#) to provide funds to organizations to offer career coaching and services for selected New Jersey residents. Funding for several other grants and specialized programs were dedicated to support workers of diverse backgrounds, including [justice-impacted](#) individuals and residents affected by the [opioid crisis](#).

Regional [Industry Partnerships](#) were formed to engage business leaders to collaborate with public partners in resolving workforce, economic, and education challenges. NJDOL's Industry Partnership teams have provided valuable career awareness events and training opportunities across various sectors, driving the development of new apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in manufacturing, education, and more.

CHARTING THE FUTURE

Through landmark legislation and forward-thinking initiatives, these efforts have not only addressed current challenges but have also laid a strong foundation for the future. By prioritizing sustainable policies and robust systems, the Murphy Administration has set the stage for workers to thrive in an evolving economic landscape.

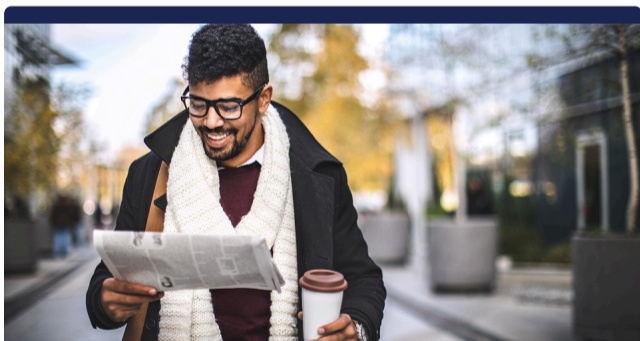
"The road toward strengthening the rights and opportunities for New Jersey's workforce is far from complete, but we've paved the way for progress for years to come," added Commissioner Asaro-Angelo. "As we continue to innovate and adapt to the changing needs of workers, this department will remain steadfast in its mission to create a fair and dynamic labor landscape that empowers everyone to succeed."

To learn more about workers' rights in New Jersey, visit [MyWorkRights.nj.gov](#).

Find out more on NJDOL's programs and services at [nj.gov/labor](#).

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