

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Margo Chaly to Lead the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority

03/19/2024

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today announced the appointment of Margo Chaly as Executive Director of New Jersey's Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA). Chaly has served as HESAA's Chief of Staff since February 2021. Effective March 23, she will succeed David Socolow, who is departing for a new opportunity after leading the Authority since February 2018.

"I want to extend my deepest thanks to David Socolow for his successful leadership of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority for more than six years," **said Governor Murphy**. "David championed and implemented vital initiatives to lower students' net costs of pursuing high-quality education and training opportunities and played a key role in our Administration's efforts to make New Jersey the best place to raise a family."

"I am also proud to announce that Margo Chaly will be the new Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority," **continued Governor Murphy**. "Margo's prior experience as Chief of Staff makes her well qualified for this position. Through her strong leadership and thorough understanding of the Authority's programs to support New Jersey students pursuing education after high school, Margo has assisted hundreds of thousands of residents throughout our state, and I am confident that she is poised to build on HESAA's progress."

Taking charge of HESAA in 2018, Socolow successfully transformed the agency's poor reputation, which preceded the Murphy Administration, by focusing on new and innovative ways to empower degree-seeking students and make high-quality higher education more accessible and affordable for New Jersey residents.

"I am grateful to Governor Murphy for the honor of serving the students and families of New Jersey over the past six years," **said David Socolow, outgoing Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority**. "I am proud of our achievements to expand opportunity for New Jersey's residents by reducing students' financial burdens and creating innovative responses to meet workforce needs. I know that HESAA will be in good hands with Margo Chaly as Executive Director. I wish her the best as she leads HESAA's dedicated staff in delivering valuable support to the people of our state."

"Through Governor Murphy's historic investments in higher education, New Jersey is a national leader in making postsecondary education more accessible and affordable," **said Margo Chaly, incoming Executive Director of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority**. "I am extraordinarily thankful to Governor Murphy for this chance to lead HESAA's dynamic team to help even more New Jerseyans achieve their dreams."

As Chief of Staff for the past three years, Chaly played an important role in HESAA's efforts to advance Governor Murphy's affordability agenda, including initiatives to:

- expand the New Jersey College Promise to offer tuition-free college degrees to students with incomes up to \$65,000 and reduce the net cost of tuition for students with incomes up to \$100,000;
- increase the share of total college costs covered by need-based Tuition Aid Grants (TAG);
- extend TAG to summer terms to enable college students to graduate faster with less debt;
- require higher education institutions to fully inform students about their actual net costs of attendance through transparent financial aid offers and student debt repayment information;
- encourage families to save for future education expenses by providing matching grants for initial contributions to newly opened NJBEST 529 college savings accounts;
- expand State aid eligibility to undocumented New Jersey Dreamers who attended a New Jersey high school for at least three years, received a diploma, and currently reside in our state;
- create new student loan repayment incentives for professionals to serve as teachers, primary healthcare and behavioral healthcare providers, and workers in targeted high-tech fields;
- help NJCLASS borrowers avoid default through income-based repayment, and help borrowers with defaulted NJCLASS loans get back on track through affordable rehabilitation options; and
- implement the College Affordability Act, allowing taxpayers with incomes up to \$200,000 to claim New Jersey State income tax deductions for NJBEST 529 savings contributions, tuition payments to a New Jersey higher education institution, and NJCLASS loan repayments.

To enable these and other expansions of HESAA's work, Chaly oversaw significant operational enhancements and capacity upgrades to the Authority's personnel, customer service, outreach and communications, information technology systems, and infrastructure.

Prior to joining Governor Murphy's Administration, Chaly was Manager of Litigation & Operations at a law firm. Prior to that, she worked for more than a decade at multinational insurance companies. Chaly, a first-generation Guatemalan-American and lifelong New Jersey resident, holds a Juris Doctor from Seton Hall University School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts from Ithaca College.

For a photo of Margo Chaly, please click [here](#)

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