

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Requiring Public Health Emergency Credits To Be Awarded to Certain Inmates and Parolees During a Public Health Emergency

10/19/2020

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S2519) which requires public health emergency credits to be awarded to certain inmates and parolees during a public health emergency. The legislation includes certain exclusions and prohibits inmates or parolees to contact their victims upon their release.

“Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, our administration has worked tirelessly to save as many lives as possible and to stem the spread of COVID-19,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Since March, the population in State correctional facilities has decreased by nearly 3,000 people (16%), including more than 1,200 people who were released under Executive Order 124. This dramatic reduction has allowed for critical social distancing as part of the fight against COVID-19.

“Thanks to the efforts of our correctional leadership, the COVID-19 positivity rate among our incarcerated population is at an impressive low of 0.09%. But the threat of COVID-19 is still present,” **continued Governor Murphy**. “Reducing our prison population will undoubtedly further our mission to combat COVID-19. This law further reduces the prison population to allow for even more social distancing.”

“The New Jersey Department of Corrections has taken numerous steps, grounded in public health guidance, to ensure staff safety and the safety of those in the state’s custody during this unprecedented pandemic,” **said New Jersey Department of Corrections Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq.** “These measures, including E.O. 124 providing for the release of certain offenders, combined with paroles and individuals completing their sentences, has decreased our population by more than 2,800. The Department will continue to lend support and take action in furtherance of public health and public safety.”

“The State Parole Board recognizes Governor Murphy and the New Jersey State Legislature for their commitment in creating a safe, healthy, and sustainable parolee release program,” **said New Jersey State Parole Board Chairman Samuel J. Plumeri, Jr.** “This law takes into consideration those serving their sentences in our state prisons as well as those within the communities that they will return to.”

Primary sponsors of S2519 include Senators Nellie Pou and Sandra B. Cunningham, and Assemblymembers Raj Mukherji, Shavonda E. Sumter, and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

“I am incredibly grateful that the governor has supported this legislation, as we continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, this will go a long way in protecting the state’s prison population,” **said Senator Nellie Pou**. “People in the state’s custody have the same fundamental right to health and safety as everyone else in our state.”



society. Given that certain inmates are reasonably able to be released early, particularly those nearing the end of their sentences, this legislation not only gives them security but it will thin the population inside the prisons, more easily provide for social distancing, and keep everyone, including corrections officers, safer.”

“New Jersey has the highest rate of inmate deaths due to COVID-19 in the nation, and one of the highest rates of infection among those incarcerated,” **said Senator Sandra Cunningham**. “This legislation puts a stronger system in place to protect our prison population when we face public health emergencies to ensure this doesn't happen again.”

“Our prison system has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Inmates have been afflicted at a particularly alarming rate due to the inability to quarantine or practice social distancing, creating a higher risk for individuals and the community at large upon their release,” **said Assemblymembers Mukherji, Sumter, and Reynolds-Jackson in a joint statement**. “Public health emergency credits will help expedite the release of certain inmates who are approaching the end of their sentences to reduce transmission to inmates and correctional facility staff. If we can enhance public health and safety by releasing eligible prisoners who are getting out anyway, we can effectively help reduce the spread of the virus in these facilities and reduce risk to the community upon their release.”

Under the bill, public health emergency credits would be awarded to any adult inmate or juvenile who is within 365 days of their scheduled release. Credits would accrue at the rate of 122 days (four months) for each month, or portion of each month, served during the declared emergency with a maximum of 244 days (eight months) of remission to be awarded for any declared emergency period. Credits would not be awarded to anyone who is serving a sentence for murder or aggravated sexual assault or who has been deemed a repetitive, compulsive sex offender.

The National Action Network under the leadership of Reverend Al Sharpton advocates for “no justice, no peace.” NAN applauds the Governor for the pandemic release,” **said Reverend Steffie Bartley, Northeastern Regional Director for the National Action Network**. “Those incarcerated have few services, the COVID crisis worsens access to health care and training. NAN will continue to offer support to thousands of returning persons.

The Pandemic Release ensures that incarcerated persons will have the opportunity of a “Second Chance.” If prison is always difficult, during COVID, even more so,” **said Governor James McGreevey, Executive Director of the New Jersey Reentry Services Corporation**. “Now the hard work with NAN begins, providing reentry services and employment to those returning home, those who want to do the “next right thing.” NJRC is grateful for the Governor’s strong leadership on a “Second Chance” state agenda.”

“It is critical that we take every step to protect our most vulnerable,” **said Reverend Dr. Charles F. Boyer, Director of Salvation and Justice and Pastor of the Bethel AME Woodbury Church**. “Just as the cases are rising in our state and nation Governor Murphy has taken a bold measure to mitigate more suffering. New Jersey serves as a national model and we are prayerful that other states follow suit.”

“With the signature of this bill, Governor Murphy is not only doing the right thing for New Jersey’s most vulnerable families, but he is also gifting the rest of the country a model for best practices during a pandemic,” **said Reverend Amos Caley, Organizer at New Jersey Prison Justice Watch**. “By prioritizing public health over heartlessly punitive policy, our governor has taken a strong step in the direction of embracing effective and compassionate justice practices. This is especially important as we brace for more waves of this deadly virus.”

“The spread of COVID-19 in New Jersey’s prisons has been a matter of public health, a matter of racial justice, and, fundamentally, a matter of life and death,” **said Amol Sinha, Executive Director, ACLU of New Jersey**. “With the signing of this bill into law, New Jersey has taken steps to prevent more unnecessary deaths, and it provides a roadmap for the rest of the nation to contain the spread of COVID-19 in an environment where people are particularly vulnerable to it.”

“New Jersey understands that reducing the prison population will protect public safety, save money, and stop dangerous diseases like COVID-19 from spreading behind bars,” **said Jessica Jackson, Chief Advocacy Officer at the REFORM Alliance**. “We applaud lawmakers for showing compassion and taking action to get people out of the virus’ path and back home where they belong.”

Governor Phil Murphy

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

Administration

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

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](/governor/admin/lt/)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](/governor/admin/fl/)

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

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

[\(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

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

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

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

Key Initiatives

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

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

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

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

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

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

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562022/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562022/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)

[TikTok \(https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?\)](https://www.tiktok.com/@njgov?)

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)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

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