



Governor Murphy Signs Landmark Legislation to Strengthen Protections, Oversight, and Accountability for Providers Serving Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

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Bill Package Reflects Years-Long Collaboration Between New Jersey Department of Human Services and State Lawmakers, Starting in 2024

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed three bipartisan bills into law to strengthen oversight, expand protections, and reinforce quality standards for providers serving individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across New Jersey. New Jersey Department of Human Services leadership and State Senator Joseph Vitale, who chairs the Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee, worked cooperatively in 2024 to draft the bills.

"Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities deserve to feel safe, respected, and supported in every setting, without exception," **said Governor Murphy**. "These measures give the State clearer authority and stronger tools to demand accountability and uphold high standards of care. With today's bill signings, we are reaffirming our commitment to ensuring the intellectual and developmental disability community receives the quality care, dignity, and support they deserve."

"Fundamental to New Jersey Human Services' mission is our commitment to support and protect people with intellectual and developmental disabilities," **said New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. "These new laws give the Department additional tools to promote high-quality care, strengthen oversight, and ensure that our systems continue to evolve in ways that reflect best practices and the needs of the people we serve. I am grateful to Senator Vitale, Assemblywoman Murphy and the bill's sponsors for prioritizing this important package of legislation on behalf of the residents that we serve."

"This legislation strengthens accountability and transparency in group homes by creating a clear, consistent framework for investigations for young adults ages 18-21 in care," **said New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer**. "By streamlining the investigative process and standardizing critical reporting criteria, we are ensuring that incidents are addressed promptly and effectively, centering the health, safety and dignity of youth in care."

"These laws strengthen our ability to hold providers accountable for violating the most serious requirements we have in place to protect individuals with IDD," **said Human Services Deputy Commissioner for Aging and Disability Services Kaylee McGuire**. "By expanding protections, reinforcing accountability, and formalizing opportunities to learn from experience, these measures will further support a system that prioritizes safety, quality, and respect across New Jersey's disability and human services network."

"These new laws give us stronger tools to make sure providers meet the high standards that individuals and families deserve," **said Division of Developmental Disabilities Assistant Commissioner Jonathan Seifried**.

The three bills signed today include:

- [S3750/A5634](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagrn/7ys5259b/zoncydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!NjBbRkJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxxtpfVNppOxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIih4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTOvxogw5WdV$) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagrn/7ys5259b/zoncydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!NjBbRkJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxxtpfVNppOxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIih4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTOvxogw5WdV\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagrn/7ys5259b/zoncydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!NjBbRkJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxxtpfVNppOxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIih4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTOvxogw5WdV$)) (Vitale, Bucco/Murphy), which enhances the New Jersey Department of Human Services' authority to enforce quality standards among residential and other service providers for individuals with developmental disabilities. Human Services will be able to impose civil penalties and fines on providers for serious violations, including failure to meet health and safety requirements, inadequate internal investigations, and operating without proper licensure. In addition, the law establishes the Residential Facility Quality of Care Improvement Fund to collect proceeds from fines to be reinvested in enhanced monitoring, regulatory actions, and quality improvement initiatives across the system.
- [S3751/A5636](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagrn/7ys5259b/fhocydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!NjBbRkJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxxtpfVNppOxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIih4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTOvxogw5WdV$) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagrn/7ys5259b/fhocydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!NjBbRkJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxxtpfVNppOxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIih4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTOvxogw5WdV\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagrn/7ys5259b/fhocydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtba!NjBbRkJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxxtpfVNppOxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIih4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTOvxogw5WdV$)) (Cryan, Vitale/Reynolds-Jackson, Sauickie, Bagolie), which revises the legal definition of child abuse or neglect to include individuals up to age 21 years in certain regulated settings, including institutions and day schools overseen by the Department of Children and Families. This change transitions the responsibility of investigations of incidents involving young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities from DHS to DCF, which funds and regulates services for young adults under the age of 21 years.

- [S3754/A5638](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagr/7ys5259b/v9ocydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!NjBRKJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxtpfVNppQxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIh4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTQyxgFgEHbv$)

([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagr/7ys5259b/v9ocydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!NjBRKJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxtpfVNppQxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIh4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTQyxgFgEHbv\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/nnagr/7ys5259b/v9ocydb_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!NjBRKJcwynwHehXmWTG-K7HKxtpfVNppQxwrDSzTqu_h22D6UAiIh4b5xeZ2JKjXNFo8k-X7lvTQyxgFgEHbv$)) (Vitale, McKnight/Speight, Bagolie), which creates the Disability Mortality and Abuse Prevention Advisory Committee within Human Services. This Advisory Committee is charged with conducting an in-depth review of selected cases involving abuse, neglect, exploitation, or mortality of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Advisory Committee will analyze trends, evaluate systemic responses to allegations, and recommend improvements to prevention strategies, reporting processes, and accountability measures. It will include individuals with lived experience, family members, medical professionals, advocates, and state agency representatives.

"These laws strengthen protections for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by reinforcing oversight and accountability," **said Senator Joseph Vitale**. "From enhancing the State's enforcement authority over service providers, to better aligning oversight responsibility among state agencies, to empowering a dedicated advisory committee to examine how cases of abuse and neglect are substantiated, this legislation ensures that safety, dignity, and quality of care remain at the center of our system. I am grateful to the Governor for signing these important reforms into law."

"Individuals with developmental disabilities and their families place immense trust in residential care providers and we must do everything in our power as legislators to ensure that trust is never broken," **said Senate Republican Leader Anthony M. Bucco**. "As a co-chair of the New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus, I've heard firsthand from families about the heartbreaking cases of abuse and neglect and we owe it to them to do better. Accountability has to be more than a promise, it must be enforceable. With the Governor's signature, we're strengthening oversight and ensuring DHS can step in when violations occur. It also strengthens those resources to improve care, safety, and quality of life where it matters most."

"Every young person in a state-regulated setting deserves to be safe, supported, and treated with dignity," **said Senator Joe Cryan**. "This new law will help ensure that our responsibility to protect them doesn't end on a child's eighteenth birthday. Extending these protections will close gaps in the system and reaffirm the state's duty to those still depending on our care."

"This legislation is about accountability and prevention," **said Senator Angela McKnight**. "For too long, families and advocates have raised concerns about abuse in group homes without seeing meaningful action. This bill empowers a committee to examine how the state investigates these cases and what needs to change to keep people safe."

"This law strengthens accountability and directs resources where they matter most, improving care for individuals with developmental disabilities," **said Assemblywoman Carol Murphy**. "It is an important step toward safer, higher-quality residential services across New Jersey and it reinforces our commitment to continuous improvement so that problems are addressed quickly and residents are protected."

"Safety does not end at age 18," **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. "This law recognizes the reality faced by young adults in institutional and supervised settings and makes clear that abuse and neglect will not be tolerated, regardless of age. By extending these protections through age 21 in specific situations, we are closing a gap and reaffirming our responsibility to keep vulnerable residents safe."

"Today marks a significant step forward in how the state addresses the persistent claims of abuse and neglect in state-funded homes, especially for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities," **said Assemblyman Alex Sauickie**. "This law extends critical protections for New Jersey's vulnerable young people who are at a higher risk of abuse and neglect in a system that families must trust to provide quality care for their loved ones. I celebrate the progress and peace of mind that this law brings and pledge to continue to fight for those who can't fight for themselves."

"Too often families in our state quietly carry the burden of neglect and mistreatment of their loved ones without answers, without closure, and, most heartbreakingly without change," **said Assemblywoman Shanique Speight**. "It's imperative that we make a collective effort to build something better for future generations - a system that protects and effectively serves individuals with disabilities as they too deserve the opportunity to live a full and fruitful life. This bill will create an important resource to help us do that."

"Families place extraordinary trust in the systems that support their loved ones with disabilities, and when that trust is broken, the consequences can be devastating for everyone involved," **said Assemblywoman Rosy Bagolie**. "Through the bills signed into law today, we're making it clear that silence and inaction are not acceptable in a state as committed to dignity and equity as New Jersey. We need to listen, and we need to be learning from the lived experiences we hear about, because every person deserves not only our protection and respect, but also the assurance of knowing they are safe and valued."

"We thank Governor Murphy, prime sponsors Senator Vitale and Assemblywoman Murphy, Senate President Scutari, Assembly Speaker Coughlin, and the entire Legislature who provided overwhelming support for advancing legislation that strengthens oversight and prioritizes accountability," **said Dr. Suzanne Buchanan, Autism New Jersey**. "Protecting vulnerable individuals demands a system where government, providers, advocacy organizations, and families work together with urgency, recognizing that each perspective is essential to building a safer system. That's why Autism New Jersey and many others worked hard to gain consensus on critical provisions, moving New Jersey closer to a system designed to prevent harm and continuously improve quality of care."

"The Arc of New Jersey commends Governor Murphy, the Department of Human Services, and the legislative sponsors of this bill package. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their families deserve a system free of abuse and neglect, and we as a state must do everything we can to create the safest system possible," **said Celine Fortin, Executive Director, The Arc of New Jersey**. "Oversight and accountability are non-negotiable, and we believe these three bills will strengthen already existing protections in both the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Human Services. We must always put the health and safety of people with IDD at the forefront and come together with our community provider agencies to ensure the service delivery system is fully equipped to support the needs of all New Jersey citizens."

"Ending abuse, neglect, and exploitation of individuals with IDD and responding effectively and with dignity when it occurs are our ethical obligations and central to our public policy. It is for this reason we are very pleased by the passage of these bills and thank the administration and legislature for their efforts in this regard," **said Catherine Chin, Executive Director, Alliance for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities**. "With respect to S3754, we look forward to the achievable recommendations and improved infrastructure that will result from the prevention advisory committee's report. And since we must remain ever vigilant, it is our hope that this committee will evolve into a standing advisory roundtable to prevent ANE of people with IDD."

Governor Phil Murphy

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