

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Four Bills Further Strengthening Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

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Total of 78 Bills Have Been Signed into Law to Better Support Moms and Babies Under First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ Initiative

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed four bills to further strengthen access to services and supports for New Jersey's moms and babies, building on eight years of work to fix the state's maternal and infant health care landscape under First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ initiative. These bills strengthen support for pregnant women and new families through safer jobs, smarter screening, and more time to get newborns covered. They also lift up the important work of doulas and midwives and help more people access these services. Together, they advance healthier outcomes for mothers, infants, and communities across our state.

"Improving maternal and infant health requires a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to strengthening care before, during, and after pregnancy," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "My Administration has made it a priority to pursue lasting change through whole-of-government action, and today's bill signing builds on our work to make New Jersey the best state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby."

"I am immensely proud of all we have accomplished over the past eight years to advance our mission of making New Jersey the gold standard in maternal and infant health," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "We are continuing to ensure all moms and babies in New Jersey have the opportunity to thrive by expanding access to lead screenings, supporting families through pregnancy and postpartum, and raising awareness for critical doula and midwife services."

"Too many families continue to face barriers in accessing the care necessary to ensure their pregnancies and births are both healthy and safe. Our commitment to improving maternal and infant health is rooted in equity, accountability, and partnership with the communities most impacted by persisting disparities," **said Lisa Asare, President and CEO of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority**. "Today's bill signings will make sure that more mothers in our state are aware of the doula and midwife services available to them, in addition to providing critical support needed to set them and their families up for success during their pregnancies and the early days of parenthood."

"These legislative measures represent significant progress made during the Murphy administration in supporting the health and well-being of mothers, infants, children, and families in New Jersey," **said Jeff Brown, Acting Health Commissioner**. "By addressing the unique needs of pregnant firefighters, strengthening lead screening protocols,

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extending health coverage for newborns, and promoting the vital work of doulas and midwives, we reaffirm our commitment to safe, equitable health care and ensure that our policies reflect the realities and health care challenges faced by families today.”

“Community doulas provide critical support before, during, and after childbirth and help improve birth outcomes. That is why increasing public awareness of the availability and benefits of doula services across the state is so important. This administration has remained committed to improving maternal and infant health, particularly for mothers and babies of color, by expanding NJ FamilyCare coverage to doula services, extending coverage for 12 months postpartum, and strengthening the doula workforce. Just last month we announced a new tool to streamline the NJ FamilyCare provider application process to make it easier for doulas to serve NJ FamilyCare families. New Jersey continues to lead in this area, and we look forward working with MIHIA and the Department of Health to inform families about this invaluable service,” **said Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman.**

“Access to health coverage for newborns is critical and providing additional time to enroll supports new parents, at one of the most significant times of their lives, when they are welcoming a new baby to their family,” **said New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance Commissioner Justin Zimmerman.** “This law builds on the state’s commitment to connect residents with health coverage so they can get the health services they need. Through Get Covered New Jersey, the state’s Official Health Insurance Marketplace, we have expanded enrollment for expectant mothers so they can enroll in coverage throughout their pregnancy and receive prenatal care, maternity services and newborn care. Increasing access to health coverage for expectant mothers and now, through this law, for newborns gives babies a healthy start in life and is an investment in a healthier New Jersey.”

“Today New Jersey takes another important step to make sure every mother and child in New Jersey gets a chance for a healthy start,” **said Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin.** “I thank Governor Murphy and the legislature for ensuring that our healthcare professionals help identify and protect vulnerable individuals who are pregnant from the risk of lead toxicity.”

The four bills signed today include:

- [A3810/S4823 \(https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/A4000/3810_I1.PDF\)](https://pub.njleg.state.nj.us/Bills/2024/A4000/3810_I1.PDF), requiring the adoption of a policy addressing job-related issues of pregnant firefighters, including, but not limited to, disclosure of a pregnancy, issuance of a medical certificate by the member’s physician in regard to any limitations on job-related duties, and the availability of any light-duty or non-hazardous assignments. The policy shall also provide that a pregnant firefighter will be given information as to when certain job-related tasks may not be appropriate for the member, the use of leave time for pregnancy, and the continuation of employee benefits.
- [A4848/S3616 \(https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2024/A5000/4848_R2.PDF\)](https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2024/A5000/4848_R2.PDF), requiring health care professionals to perform lead screening on pregnant persons under certain circumstances based on the most recent guidelines and recommendations of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.
- [A5459/S4983 \(https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2024/A5500/5459_R1.PDF\)](https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2024/A5500/5459_R1.PDF), extending the time period in which to enroll newborn infants in health benefits coverage from 60 days to 90 days.
- [S3091/A4222 \(https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2024/S3500/3091_R2.PDF\)](https://pub.njleg.gov/bills/2024/S3500/3091_R2.PDF), requiring the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority to establish a public awareness campaign on the benefits of doula and midwife services. The campaign will include a comprehensive description of the person-centered and supportive services provided for birthing persons and infants during the prenatal, birthing, and postpartum periods by doulas and midwives; the culturally competent nature of the care and services provided by doulas and midwives to birthing persons; the health benefits and improved maternal and infant health outcomes that may result from doula and midwives; and any free or low-cost resources made available by the State for doula and midwife services.

Since Nurture NJ's inception in 2019, New Jersey has made significant progress in maternal and infant health care and outcomes including: starting or completing over half of the Nurture NJ Strategic Plan recommendations; establishing the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority; becoming the second state to extend Medicaid to 365 days postpartum; and launching Family Connects NJ, the nation's most robust universal nurse home visitation program to ensure that every new parent is visited by a nurse in their home for free within two weeks after bringing home a new baby. Through these groundbreaking policies and programs, New Jersey has become a national leader in the fight against the maternal and infant health crisis.

Through the over 78 pieces of maternal and infant health legislation signed by Governor Murphy, New Jersey has:

- Created the first-in-the-nation New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Authority and the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center;
- Incentivized quality health care and evidence-based best practices;
- Extended fertility care, provided comprehensive family planning, and protected reproductive freedom;
- Grown the maternal health care workforce and enabled doula supports;
- Expanded and strengthened family leave and temporary disability leave, established mandatory sick leave, and facilitated child care;
- Brought data to action through the first-in-the-nation Report Card of Hospital Maternity Care, the New Jersey Maternal Care Quality Collaborative, the New Jersey Maternal Data Center, and the New Jersey Maternal Mortality Review Committee; and
- Put nourishing options in reach through lactation support and the Healthy Small Food Retailer Act.

"The Legislature's collaboration with this Administration has delivered strong improvements in maternal and infant health, moving New Jersey in the right direction for mothers and their babies," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. "The bills signed today solidify the comprehensive framework we have built by protecting pregnant first responders, expanding access to care, raising awareness of available services, and improving prenatal screening standards. I want to thank Governor Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy for their partnership in this critical work, and will continue to champion policies that help build stronger, healthier families."

"Improving maternal and infant health in communities across our state is of the utmost importance. That begins with preventing avoidable exposure to dangerous toxins like lead," **said Senator James Beach**. "This legislation takes a common-sense approach to ensuring access to timely screening when risk factors are present, prioritizing early intervention to give families a healthier start."

"Extending this enrollment window provides families with meaningful peace of mind at a time when their focus should be on the health and well-being of their newborn," **said Senator Joseph Lagana**. "This bill helps ensure that infants have uninterrupted access to medical care, while giving parents a more realistic period to complete enrollment requirements. It is a simple and practical measure that supports families during an important and often stressful transition."

"The journey of every growing family is unique, and we have made it a top priority to recognize and address all of the diverse challenges new mothers and their babies face," **said Senator Angela McKnight**. "With the signing of these bills, we are expanding the scope of maternal and infant health even further so that all parents are empowered with the resources and support they need to thrive during pregnancy and in the first months of a child's life."

"The early weeks of parenthood are a blur of checkups, feedings, and sleep deprivation," **said Senator Raj Mukherji**. "By extending the automatic coverage period and enrollment window for newborns in essential programs like FamilyCare, we're giving families a modest but meaningful buffer at a moment when every minute and every worry counts. This bill simply ensures babies stay covered long enough for families to navigate the enrollment process with

breathing room and peace of mind, replacing the cliff with a cushion.”

“This bill ensures that we take proactive steps to identify risks early, protect mothers and their unborn children, and foster healthier futures for families across New Jersey,” **said Assemblyman Reginald Atkins**. “Identifying and addressing these problems early on can reduce or prevent long-term health complications and save lives.”

“New Jersey’s firefighters always answer our calls and it’s crucial that we have their backs during one of life’s most transformative moments – pregnancy,” **said Assemblywoman Rosy Bagolie**. “By requiring fire departments around the state to adopt policies addressing job-related issues, we’re helping take the guesswork out of what pregnant firefighters can expect on the job and offering the support they need and deserve throughout their pregnancies.”

“On our best days, health insurance is rarely top of mind; during a moment as meaningful as the birth of a child, it shouldn’t even cross our minds,” **said Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill**. “By extending the time period new parents can enroll their newborns in health care benefits, we are giving them the time they need to focus on what matters most—their family.”

“The arrival of a new child is not just a cause for celebration but also a period of adjustment where families should not have to worry about the paperwork needed to ensure their child’s care is covered by insurance,” **said Assemblywoman Margie Donlon**. “This legislation helps ensure that every newborn infant can receive the care they need without parents having to worry about the financial uncertainty that can come with medical care.”

“Welcoming a child into the world is a very joyous – and very chaotic – time for new parents,” **said Assemblywoman Andrea Katz**. “Our bill ensures that their baby’s health care remains covered under for an extra 30 days and allows more opportunity to submit the necessary paperwork. Extending the enrollment period allowed to enroll a newborn in health benefits will take away an immediate stressor as parents adjust to life with their new baby.”

“Firefighters deserve the same job protections and security as anyone else, and pregnancy should never jeopardize one’s livelihood or the career they’ve worked so hard to build,” **said Assemblywoman Tennille McCoy**. “This legislation brings a new level of compassion to firehouses across our state, making sure expectant firefighters are treated with care and respect during what is one of the most important times in their lives.”

“As a volunteer firefighter, I know how deeply this work becomes part of who you are, and protecting those who protect us means showing up for them when it matters most,” **said Assemblyman Cody Miller**. “No firefighter should ever feel that starting or growing a family means stepping into uncertainty or silence at work and through this bill, we’re making sure pregnant firefighters are supported on the job.”

“Having a trained professional to guide you through one of life’s most transformational moments has advantages for mother and baby alike,” **said Assemblywoman Carmen Theresa Morales**. “It’s our job as legislators to make sure that parents-to-be have access to the most information possible to help them through this time. The signing into law of Bill A4222 today is an important step in enabling us to do that.”

“We are not just protecting individual families but also promoting the health and safety of our communities across New Jersey,” **said Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul**. “A4848 will ensure pregnant patients receive the necessary testing and care they deserve in addition to fostering awareness and education about this critical issue.”

“With this legislation, we raise awareness and empower mothers with knowledge, support, and the resources they need for a healthier, happier pregnancy and birth experience,” **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. “By

providing constituents with knowledge of doula services we give them the tools to make informed decisions about their pregnancy and childbirth.”

“Giving birth can be one of life’s most meaningful and joyful experiences, yet it also carries real and serious risks. That is why legislation, like the bills being signed into law, which focus on proactive, supportive care for pregnant individuals is so critical,” **said Assemblywoman Shanique Speight**. “By establishing measures such as lead screenings for those at risk and increasing awareness of the benefits of doulas and midwives, we can better protect pregnant individuals and help ensure healthier, safer, and more affirming birthing experiences.”

“Many think of midwives and doulas as people who can help in the moment of labor, but the support they offer starts long before delivery and remains in place well after,” **said Assemblywoman Lisa Swain**. “This bill will ensure expectant mothers are aware of the full range of medical, educational, and emotional services these professionals provide before, during, and after childbirth.”

“When I first became a Firefighter, you could count the amount of females in our profession statewide on one hand. The NJFMBA is proud to see the female ranks grow over the years,” **said Ed Donnelly, President of the New Jersey State Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association**. “Our Union will be out front advocating for our female Firefighters. Making sure their rights are protected on and off the job. We thank the sponsors of this Bill and our Governor for his signature.”

“The PFANJ commends Governor Murphy, Assemblyman Miller, Assemblywoman McCoy, Assemblywoman Bagolie, Senator Ruiz, and Senator McKnight for passing and signing A-3810/S-4823 into law, recognizing the real challenges pregnant firefighters and their families face,” **said Matthew Caliente, President of the Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey**. “This law is a positive and necessary step forward for the fire service and for workplace protections that make sense. We thank for their leadership and ensuring pregnant firefighters are treated fairly, supported on the job, and able to continue serving safely.”

“These bills reflect a meaningful commitment to protecting mothers, pregnant people, newborns, and families at moments when policy truly matters,” **said Ronsha A. Dickerson, CD, Co-Founder and Director of Community Doulas of South Jersey**. “From workplace protections and preventive health screening to expanded coverage in public awareness of doula and midwifery care, this package centers community, dignity, safety and access. Community Doulas of South Jersey applauds this progress, will continue to lift up marginalized communities and look forward to continued partnership to ensure every family in New Jersey is valued and receive respectful, person centered support before, during, and after birth.”

“This bill brings attention to the long-overlooked research that tells us that blood lead levels adversely affect pregnancy outcomes and infant health,” **said Sean Jackson, CEO of Isles**. “NJ A-4848/S-3616 recommends a simple lead test during pregnancy that may improve these outcomes. We are proud that New Jersey is a leader on this issue.

“Risk Assessment of lead exposure should take place at the earliest contact with pregnant or lactating women, and blood lead testing should be performed if a single risk factor is identified,” **said Dr. Thomas Westover, MD, Chief of Maternal Fetal Medicine at Capital Health, Chair of NJ Section of American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG)**. “Prenatal lead exposure has known adverse effects on maternal health and infant outcomes across a wide range of maternal blood lead levels.

“We can help New Jersey residents by requiring a blood lead test during pregnancy so that families are alert to

potential problems and can make immediate changes in their environment,” **said Adrienne S. Ettinger, ScD, MPH, MS (Rutgers University) and former Chief of Lead Poisoning Prevention and Environmental Health Tracking Branch at CDC.**

“Preeclampsia or high blood pressure during pregnancy is a leading cause of maternal morbidity and mortality in NJ,” **said Robyn D’Oria, RNC, MA, APN, CEO of Central Jersey Family Health Consortium and Chair, Board of Directors of National Preeclampsia Foundation.** “Knowing early in pregnancy if a person has elevated lead levels can give us an early warning sign of the risk for preeclampsia and allow us to monitor and treat the disease before severe complications occur.”

“We usually think about a person’s current environment as the only contributor to their lead exposure,” **said Brian Buckley, PhD, Exposure Scientist and Executive Director Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute.** “The remobilization of lead from the bone during pregnancy and breastfeeding means it is also important to consider where mom grew up and the exposures they had over the course of a lifetime, to comprehensively identify who is at risk.”

“New Jersey lawmakers have pioneered policy and made significant investments to protect residents from lead poisoning,” **said Ruth Ann Norton, President & CEO, Green & Healthy Homes Initiative.** “S3616 is a critically important step forward that will be emulated throughout the country and will advance the state’s standing as a national leader concerning childhood lead poisoning prevention, and maternal and infant health outcomes.”

“This new public awareness campaign is an important step toward recognizing and helping more families understand the value of midwifery care during this pivotal time in their lives,” **said Julie Blumenfeld, DNP, CNM, President of the New Jersey Affiliate of the American College of Nurse-Midwives.** “Governor Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy have made maternal health a priority throughout their tenure and this new legislation to highlight the benefits of midwifery care is a meaningful part of improving outcomes for birthing people across the state.”

“By strengthening protections for pregnant workers, expanding preventive care, improving newborn coverage, and elevating doula and midwife services, these bills move New Jersey closer to ensuring every family has the support they need for healthy beginnings, especially those most at risk,” **said Maritza I. Raimundi-Petroski, VP of Strategic Initiatives, Prevention and Community Engagement, The Children’s Home Society of New Jersey.**

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