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NJDOL, Community Partners Reach Nearly 47K Workers in First Year of Grant Program to Improve Access to State Benefits, Protections

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TRENTON – Nearly 47,000 workers received targeted information on New Jersey’s paid leave laws and other work rights during the first year of a grant program created by New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) to advance awareness and use of these programs.

The CARE Grant (Cultivating Access Rights and Equity) launched in [March 2022](#) to promote outreach, education, and support aimed at expanding access to New Jersey’s many generous benefits and protections for eligible workers. The first round of CARE grants awarded \$1.1 million to 13 grantees, including four collaboratives, totaling 28 organizations. Grantees included community organizations, worker centers, domestic violence agencies, service providers, and faith-based groups across the state that have demonstrated trusted relationships with their communities, as well as multi-lingual and culturally specific methods, and the capacity to link underserved residents with government benefits and protections.

The first round of grant funding resulted in 46,785 workers reached through direct outreach, such as community events, phone banking, canvassing, trainings, workshops, webinars, counseling, and technical assistance, as well as sharing more than 220,000 mass messages, including targeted social media posts and local radio advertisements.

“The partnerships fostered through the CARE grant have been integral in connecting vital state services to New Jersey workers and raising awareness of these programs,” said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo. “Workers’ rights have been significantly enhanced under the Murphy Administration, and we are continuing to work with trusted community partners to ensure all residents know every benefit and protection to which they’re entitled.”

Grantees have worked closely with NJDOL representatives, attending presentations and trainings on such topics as Unemployment Insurance (UI), Wage and Hour Law, [Strategic Enforcement](#), Immigration Relief, and Health and Safety. Through the CARE program, grantees have provided NJDOL with valuable feedback on paid leave materials, as well as supported user testing for a [new maternity timeline tool](#) and ongoing [UI modernization efforts](#) to better serve residents. Grantees have also collaborated with each other to learn more about each other’s services and focus population needs. In addition, the CARE program supports NJDOL’s Strategic Enforcement goals by strengthening partnerships with community-based organizations and deepening their understanding of the state’s labor laws.

“With the generous support of the New Jersey Department of Labor’s CARE grant, the Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund (LALDEF) successfully disseminated valuable information about earned sick leave to immigrant workers in Mercer County,” said Cecy Jimenez-Weeast, executive director of the group, which received one of the initial grants. “Throughout the grant period, LALDEF distributed information to over 4,600 workers across 38 in-person community events. Additionally, LALDEF effectively addressed various concerns raised by immigrant workers, helping them advocate for their rightful paid time off and work rights.”

This past summer, NJDOL awarded \$1.5 million through a [second round](#) of CARE grants to 17 grantees, including three collaboratives, comprising nine organizations. The second year of the CARE grant included additional one-time funding for outreach and education on Unemployment Insurance to workers and service providers and outreach and education to employers.

[A recent study](#), commissioned by NJDOL and conducted by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development and other partners, found 71 percent of New Jersey workers report having access to paid time off to care for themselves, while half were able to identify Earned Sick Leave and Family Leave Insurance by name. Applications to the leave programs are increasing, and efforts to reach underserved communities are ongoing.

NJDOL launched outreach and education efforts during the Murphy Administration to help ensure all residents know their benefits and rights at work and to help navigate any roadblocks to accessing these benefits. The CARE grant is one of its biggest initiatives to date, with the work performed under this program resulting in tens of thousands of dollars in benefits for claimants to care for themselves and loved ones. The department also hosts virtual and in-person presentations, organizes tables at public events such as the First Lady’s Nurture NJ Family Festivals, and conducts direct outreach to medical providers, employers and strategic partners.

The CARE grant meets stipulations of the New Jersey Temporary Disability Benefits Law (P.L.1948, c.110 [C.43:21- 49]), which mandates the NJDOL to enter into contracts with community-based organizations to disseminate information about employees’ rights regarding Temporary Disability and Family Leave Insurance, as well as the New Jersey Earned Sick Leave Law (N.J.S.A. 34:11D-1), requiring the NJDOL to develop

and implement a multi-lingual outreach program. Unemployment Insurance outreach and education is funded through a USDOL Federal Unemployment Insurance Equity Grant Program under the American Rescue Plan Act.

To learn more about the CARE program, visit nj.gov/labor/care.

For more information on worker benefits and protections, visit myworkrights.nj.gov.

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