

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Allowing Public Office Holders and Candidates for Public Office to Use Campaign Funds for Related Child Care Expenses

10/8/2020

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S698) allowing public office holders and candidates for public office to use political contributions to pay for child care expenses related to official or campaign activities.

“Public office holders and candidates often juggle parenting, their full-time careers, and their work in office and on the campaign trail,” **said Governor Murphy**. “No one should be excluded from running for or serving in office because they cannot find or afford child care. I am proud to sign this legislation that will allow those looking to serve our state to use campaign contributions for child care.”

Primary sponsors of S698 include Senators M. Teresa Ruiz, Nicholas P. Scutari, and Sandra B. Cunningham, and Assemblymembers Eliana Pintor Marin, Nancy F. Munoz, and Gary S. Schaer.

“This law will help parents avoid the difficult situation of juggling childcare and running for public office with hopes of serving their communities,” **said Senator Ruiz**. “With this change parents, and especially women who are traditionally the main caretaker, will have the support they deserve to make the dream of running for office a reality. It is an honor to sponsor legislation removing an obstacle that impedes some women from running for office and I am grateful Governor Murphy saw the value in it as well. The more inclusive and diverse the individuals sitting around our policy decision-making tables, the better the outcomes are for the public.”

“Campaign funds are spent on a myriad of items that are necessary to support a candidate’s efforts while running for public office,” **said Senator Scutari**. “This signing authorizes an expenditure that will greatly help candidates on the campaign trail and will encourage many more members of our communities to run for office without having to choose between serving their community and caring for their children.”

“When the people crafting our laws are able to accurately reflect the people they represent, the outcomes are better for everyone involved. For many working class New Jerseyans, especially women, running for office is simply not financially feasible,” **said Senator Cunningham**. “This law will ease the burden, enabling more people to pursue their dreams of running for office.”

“Having a family should not prevent women from a rewarding career as an elected official,” **said Assemblywoman Pintor Marin**. “Campaigning for office is time consuming and costly. Making childcare more affordable for all candidates gives those seeking public office an opportunity to be true public servants. I thank Governor Murphy for signing this bill into law.”

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"The problem has never been that women don't win; it's that women don't run," **said Assemblywoman Munoz**. "Working together and across the aisle, we are collectively trying to remove the impediments to women running for office. I am glad Governor Murphy is signing this bill. It will help many more women enter politics when they thought it wasn't a possibility before."

"Childcare expenses can often be too burdensome for candidates to bear forcing them to forego campaigning for public office," **said Assemblyman Schaer**. "Allowing the use of campaign funds for campaign-related childcare expenses levels the playing field and will open doors for more women to enter politics. This is an important step forward for New Jersey."

Under S698, expenses incurred by the holder of a public office or a candidate for child care may be paid from campaign contributions only if the expenses are for providing care for the well-being and protection of the child outside of the home, in a child care facility, or in the home of the office holder or candidate. Eligible expenses will be those that result directly from activities in which the office holder or candidate engage for the purposes of holding office or a campaign for public office, and would not have otherwise been incurred but for those activities. Child care expenses will not include payments to a member of the office holder's or candidate's household.

"Running for office takes a huge toll on a family's budget, especially while raising children. Campaign funds for child care will remove a major financial obstacle for working families and mothers at a time when women are increasingly considering elected office," **said Liuba Grechen Shirley, Founder and CEO of Vote Mama PAC and the Vote Mama Foundation, which is working to pass campaign funds for child care in all 50 states by 2023**. "We desperately need working women in office who understand family needs firsthand, and I trust that this will expand and diversify the ranks of future candidates in New Jersey. Thank you to Christine Clarke, whose candidacy Vote Mama was proud to support, Sen. Sandra Cunningham, Sen. Teresa Ruiz, Sen. Nicholas Scutari, and Governor Murphy for your leadership in getting this vitally important law passed."

"We commend Governor Murphy and the members of our legislature for this legislation, which removes a significant barrier to elective office for many parents, particularly those with less disposable income, and for women, who disproportionately bear the burden of child care," **said Jean Sinzdek, Associate Director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University**. "Only a handful of states have passed similar laws, and New Jersey's goes further by including officeholders in addition to candidates, making the Garden State a model for the nation in promoting access to public service for all."

"As a working-class mother of four young children who lived the need for this important bill during my 2019 campaign for state office, I can attest personally to what this means for New Jersey women. Thank you to the Governor and the New Jersey Legislature for this critical step to level the playing field for moms seeking entry into politics," **said Christine Clarke, environmental advocate and recent Assembly candidate in LD26**.

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