



## Governor Murphy and Senate President Scutari Announce \$5 Million to Expand Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Care Services in Union County

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*Governor Joins State Leaders for Panel Discussion on Youth Mental Health in New Jersey*

**HILLSIDE** – During a panel discussion on youth mental health at Kean University, Governor Phil Murphy and Senate President Nicholas Scutari today announced \$5 million in American Rescue Plan funds to help Union County expand access to equitable, affordable child and adolescent mental health care services. The Governor and Senate President were joined by Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer and Secretary of Higher Education Dr. Brian Bridges for a panel discussion about mental health systems in New Jersey.

"My Administration continues to take a whole-of-government approach, alongside our legislative and community partners, to addressing the mental health needs of New Jersey youth," said Governor Murphy. "It is imperative we work to ensure every young person has access to the resources and services they need to thrive, particularly in light of the national youth mental health crisis that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. We must continue to have these conversations to help reduce the stigma around mental health as we work to expand access to mental health support in every community in our state – including right here in Union County with the allocation of this \$5 million to help children and adolescents throughout the region."

"The children of New Jersey have been through so much over the past few years, we need to support them, listen to them, and provide resources for them to overcome feelings of depression, anxiety and loneliness," said Senate President Scutari. "Improving access and affordability is critical and can be the difference between life and death. This infusion of state funding will go towards removing the barriers keeping them from getting the help they need."

The \$5 million allocation approved by the Joint Budget Oversight Committee last month will support the creation of a Pediatric Collaborative Care Training Center in Union County to train pediatric primary care providers, behavioral health clinicians, and child and adolescent psychiatrists in order to increase the number of experts able to provide youth mental health care.

The funding will also enable a data analytics infrastructure that identifies local pediatric primary care practices in need of newly-trained behavioral health clinicians so these experts can be embedded in these practices. Primary care practices in areas where residents have difficulty accessing pediatric mental health care services and may therefore rely on emergency departments will be prioritized when determining placement of behavioral health care providers.

Technological upgrades that enable same day, on-demand pediatric behavioral health assessments and treatments at various schools, university health centers, urgent care sites, and primary care offices will also be supported by the \$5 million in American Rescue Plan funding.

This funding represents another component of the Murphy Administration's ongoing efforts to expand access to mental health care on behalf of young people throughout New Jersey. Rising ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fd1fmj/nrddit/nzjrj4...!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaILN4IP-jfdyMHNMuZlVkuIqBbk6B-ltrlnTJd5oENu5cm1AuR18AsIHjUENev6oChB9QX4FDfMw0je3f7Dv7VHTMgS](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fd1fmj/nrddit/nzjrj4...!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaILN4IP-jfdyMHNMuZlVkuIqBbk6B-ltrlnTJd5oENu5cm1AuR18AsIHjUENev6oChB9QX4FDfMw0je3f7Dv7VHTMgS)) mental health challenges among youth in recent years is also one of the reasons Governor Murphy chose youth mental health as the focus of his Chair's Initiative as head of the National Governors Association.

Participants in Tuesday's panel – moderated by Dr. Kaitlin Mulcahy, Director of the Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health at Montclair State University – highlighted some of the Administration's other youth mental health efforts, including:

- A first-in-the-nation partnership ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fd1fmj/nrddit/3rkrj4...!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaILN4IP-jfdyMHNMuZlVkuIqBbk6B-ltrlnTJd5oENu5cm1AuR18AsIHjUENev6oChB9QX4FDfMw0je3f7Dv7VHTMgS](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fd1fmj/nrddit/3rkrj4...!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaILN4IP-jfdyMHNMuZlVkuIqBbk6B-ltrlnTJd5oENu5cm1AuR18AsIHjUENev6oChB9QX4FDfMw0je3f7Dv7VHTMgS)) established by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE) that is currently providing free, 24/7 access to virtual mental health support at 44 institutions of higher education throughout New Jersey;
- \$16 million ([https://urldefense.com/v3/\\_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fd1fmj/nrddit/jkrj4...!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaILN4IP-jfdyMHNMuZlVkuIqBbk6B-ltrlnTJd5oENu5cm1AuR18AsIHjUENev6oChB9QX4FDfMw0je3f7Dv7VHTMgS](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/fd1fmj/nrddit/jkrj4...!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbaILN4IP-jfdyMHNMuZlVkuIqBbk6B-ltrlnTJd5oENu5cm1AuR18AsIHjUENev6oChB9QX4FDfMw0je3f7Dv7VHTMgS)) in American Rescue Plan funding being provided by OSHE to institutions of higher education so they can develop community mental health provider partnerships and build multicultural competency among faculty and staff through professional development opportunities;
- The creation of a first-in-the-nation statewide student mental wellness support network through DCF that will provide tiered, evidence-based prevention and intervention services to students in K-12 schools to help address and prevent issues such as suicide, substance use, and bullying.

"New Jersey is committed to a robust, comprehensive, and coordinated continuum of care, from prevention and early intervention through to deeper end clinical services and supports," said NJ DCF Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer. "It's about maximizing our system's effectiveness in supporting youth mental health and wellbeing with the resources at our disposal and ensuring the right help is available at the right time for children and youth in need. I'm grateful to Governor Murphy and leadership in our State Legislature for realizing that prevention and clinical intervention are all a part of the same continuum of care, and that we need both to adequately and effectively support young people in New Jersey to be safe, healthy, and connected."

"The correlation between a student's mental health and their academic success, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, demands that we find new and comprehensive ways of providing support to students on New Jersey campuses," said Dr. Brian K. Bridges, Secretary of Higher Education. "With \$26 million in federal funding, thanks to the Governor's commitment to addressing youth mental health, we are doing just that. The telemental health partnership as well as community partnerships and cultural competency training grants all combine to help our institutions better meet students where they are and set them up for lifelong success."

"Stepping Up to Mental Health" was one of the main focuses within my initiatives of the 2023 theme of "Building a Stronger Union County," and I am grateful for the recent allocation of \$5 million in funding from the State of New Jersey for the Union County Mental Health Project, which will primarily support the establishment of a Pediatric Collaborative Care Training Center in Union County," said Union County Commissioner Chairman Sergio Granados. "This generous contribution will play a crucial role in expanding access and enhancing the quality of healthcare services in our county. By acknowledging the importance of mental health and collaborating with non-profit organizations, medical institutions, the school community and the community at large, we aim to create a world where every child and young person feels valued, supported, and empowered. We hope to foster an environment where they feel comfortable discussing their issues and seeking help when needed."

"This collaborative effort exemplifies our shared commitment to the well-being of our youth, and we are profoundly grateful to the Governor, Senate President, and the State for this funding, their vision and support," said Debbie-Ann Anderson, Director of the Union County Department Human Services. "Being able to build and expand our services, we can ensure that more children and adolescents receive the mental health support they need. Together, we will create a brighter and healthier future for generations to come, where every young person can thrive and reach their full potential."

"I am deeply pleased with the leadership provided by Governor Murphy and his administration to raise awareness and amplify community-based strategies to support children and youth mental health," said Dr. Mulcahy. "Research has demonstrated the lifelong benefits of promoting relational, emotional and psychological health as early as possible. With the administration's explicit focus on youth mental health, and the \$5Million initiative in Union County, I am hopeful that we are finally reimagining the stigma that has left mental health needs to be missed or misunderstood, and has caused services to be inaccessible and unaffordable."

### Governor Phil Murphy

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