

Governor Phil Murphy

First Lady Tammy Murphy Hosts 7th Annual Nurture NJ Leadership Summit, Focusing on Building a Healthier & More Equitable Future for Maternal and Infant Health

Posted on - 12/9/2024

EAST BRUNSWICK – First Lady Tammy Murphy today held her 7th annual Nurture NJ Leadership Summit in East Brunswick, bringing together more than 700 influential leaders, subject matter experts, community leaders, advocates across industries, and most importantly mothers to continue New Jersey’s progress toward becoming the safest, most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby. The summit focused on the urgent need to strengthen and diversify the perinatal workforce, a critical element in improving maternal and infant health outcomes for all families across the state – regardless of race. Since its inception, the Nurture NJ Leadership Summit has grown significantly, from just 100 diverse New Jersey participants at the first event in 2018 to 700 in person this year, with more than 200 joining remotely and many sharing best practices from their own work around the world.

“Seven years ago, at the outset of our administration, New Jersey was grappling with a dire maternal and infant health crisis. A Black mother in our state was almost seven times more likely than a white mother to die of maternity-related complications and a Black baby was over three times more likely than a white baby not to make it to his or her first birthday. We knew we had to take action to better understand what was driving this health crisis and to advance effective policy solutions to ensure all families in New Jersey benefit from the healthiest start possible,” **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. “From the beginning, we have relied on our partners – including hospital CEOs, mothers, pastors, doulas and more – to inform our approach to effectuating lasting change. The progress we have made in lowering our maternal mortality rate and improving other crucial metrics is a testament to our collaborative efforts. While there is still much more work to be done, each convening brings us one step closer to making New Jersey the safest and most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby. I am so grateful to everyone who participated in today’s Nurture NJ Leadership Summit, and I look forward to continuing this fight on behalf of New Jersey families.”

“Improving maternal and infant health outcomes in New Jersey requires a collaborative approach in which everyone has a seat at the table. By working together with government representatives, policymakers, hospital administrators and community advocates, we can build a stronger, more equitable maternal care system that ensures all New Jersey families benefit from a healthy start. Today’s Nurture NJ Leadership Summit serves as a vital platform for making this vision a reality. It is a privilege to lead the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority and to be trusted to continue the important work of Nurture NJ beyond the Murphy Administration so that we can maintain progress for our communities,” **said Lisa Asare, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority**.

“First Lady Tammy Murphy’s leadership has been instrumental in reshaping maternal health through innovative policies and programs, helping define a future where New Jersey is the safest, most equitable state to deliver and raise a baby,” **said Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. “Today’s Summit was another opportunity to highlight forward-thinking initiatives and strategies by hearing from a wide range of leaders and experts. Through collaborative efforts between government, nonprofit, community, and parent leaders, New Jersey is advancing best practices and evidence-based policies that ensure better care for mothers and babies.”

"Nurture NJ is a maternal moonshot, engaging so many sectors of government, health care and the nonprofit world to make New Jersey the safest place to deliver and raise a baby, and that expansive partnership was certainly a highlight of today's summit," **said Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer.** "We know that our efforts are already lowering the maternal mortality rate in our state and ensuring better outcomes for families, and it's thanks to the leadership of our First Lady, Tammy Murphy, and the ideas and energy of all who assembled today. I'm proud that DCF — through the Family Connects NJ universal home visiting program — can play a part in this exciting endeavor which is reshaping the maternal landscape in NJ for the better."

The event featured a day full of dynamic, expert-led discussion and collaborative group breakout sessions, moderated by Barbara George Johnson, Chair of the Maternal Infant Health Innovation Authority Board. Attendees included national experts in maternal and infant health care, doulas, health care providers, policymakers, activists, nonprofit leaders, moms and more, all coming together to share unique insights and work toward concrete solutions to sustain the progress of the Nurture NJ initiative. All attendees were encouraged to actively contribute ideas, provide feedback and collaborate on new strategies for improving care and reducing health disparities.

"As the Founder and President of the National Birth Equity Collaborative, it has been a true honor to work with the First Lady and the team in NJ who have been pioneers in ensuring Black Mamas, babies and their villages thrive to ensure all boats rise," **said Joia Crear Perry, MD, Founder & President of the National Birth Equity Collaborative, who delivered the keynote address at the summit.**

"New Jersey has made significant progress over the past seven years to improve outcomes for new moms and babies across the state, however, our work is far from over. That is why it is so important to continue bringing experts across industries together to investigate strategies to make New Jersey the gold standard in maternal and infant health care. The Nurture NJ Leadership Summit is a powerful example of how collaboration can drive meaningful change in our state," **said Barbara George Johnson, Chair of the Maternal and Infant Health Authority Board and moderator of today's breakout session.**

The event's first panel, titled "Building a Healthier Future: Diversifying and Educating the Next Workforce," was introduced by Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman and featured the voices of Jennie Joseph, Founder of Commonsense Childbirth; Amy Murtha, MD, Dean of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School; Janet Dickerson, Communications Consultant for Black Mamas Matter Alliance; and Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Prevention Programs, and Community Engagement, the Children's Home Society of New Jersey.

"We can only make New Jersey the best place to have a baby if it is the best place for all our families. We need to double down on our efforts. We must continue to build a healthcare system that is equitable, accessible, and rooted in cultural competence — this is a fight we can't afford to lose," **said Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman.**

"I am thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with First Lady Murphy along with my esteemed colleagues and fellow panelists as we gather to listen and learn from New Jersey's frontline perinatal health community, grassroots activists and parents. Hope for the future and for the change we are yearning for will manifest so long as we hold to our commitments to share, learn and act together to end the scourge of maternal morbidity and mortality once and for all," **said Jennie Joseph, Founder of Commonsense Childbirth.**

"The Nurture NJ Leadership Summit is a unique opportunity to bring together the collective expertise of all of the stakeholder groups to advance maternal and infant health. The Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School is eager to partner across NJ to improve health outcomes for moms and babies," **said Amy Murtha, MD, Dean of Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.**

"The work being done through Nurture NJ aligns deeply with the Black Mamas Matter Alliance's mission to transform maternal health care for Black women and birthing people. At BMMA, we've seen firsthand how building a culturally competent pipeline of Black birth workers, doulas, midwives, and care providers creates lasting positive change in communities. These skilled professionals bring not just expertise, but lived experience and cultural understanding that is essential for providing comprehensive, respectful care across the full spectrum of maternal, reproductive, and perinatal health," **said Janet A. Dickerson, Communications Consultant, Black Mamas Matter Alliance, Inc. (BMMA).**

"At the Children's Home Society of New Jersey, we are committed to promoting inclusion in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way, recognizing our communities' unique needs. Our community-based doulas excel through collaborative efforts, and we strive to continue building perinatal care teams that value the important contributions of doulas. Together with our midwives and like-minded organizations, we contribute to New Jersey's

efforts to reduce maternal health disparities. This summit allows key stakeholders to learn from others, explore new pathways, and build partnerships for a healthier future,” **said Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives, Prevention Programs, and Community Engagement, the Children’s Home Society of New Jersey.**

The event’s second panel, titled “A New Era of Care: Innovations in Maternal Health,” was introduced by Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Beyer and moderated by Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman. Panelists included Carole Johnson, Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration; Neel Shah, MD, MPP, FACOG, Chief Medical Officer of Maven Clinic; Kimberly Seals Allers, Founder of IRTH App; and Charlotte Owens, MD, FACOG, Head of Medical Affairs & Outcomes for Organon.

“Improving maternal and infant health requires leadership and collaboration across all sectors – government, health care providers, philanthropy, community leaders, people with lived experience, advocates, and the private sector,” **said Carole Johnson, Administrator of the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.** “We are delighted to see this broad-based collaboration represented at the Nurture NJ Leadership Summit and to join this important conversation about how we can continue to work together to advance HRSA’s – and New Jersey’s – priority of safe, high quality health care and supports for all moms and babies.”

“Nurture NJ is a model for the whole nation of what can happen when we make a concerted choice to invest in the wellbeing of mothers,” **said Neel Shah, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Maven Clinic.** “I’m proud to come together in my home state with government, industry, and community leaders to celebrate this progress and discuss the work ahead.”

“The magnitude and urgency of the maternal health crisis requires radical innovation along with greater transparency and community accountability. I’m honored to participate in the Nurture NJ Summit to talk broadly about the power of reimagining maternal care and share specifically about how IrtH leverages technology and power of patient stories to create robust data to drive hospital quality improvement and a new era for more respectful and equitable care,” **said Kimberly Seals Allers, Founder of IRTH App.**

“Advancing maternal health requires our collective effort to ensure every mother has access to the highest quality care, including the support she needs long before and after pregnancy. By supporting and empowering women, we can provide the resources and options needed for healthy pregnancy and beyond,” **said Charlotte Owens, MD, FACOG, Head of Medical Affairs & Outcomes for Organon.**

Since the inaugural summit in 2018, the Nurture NJ Leadership Summit has played a key role in informing the statewide Nurture NJ initiative, launched by First Lady Tammy Murphy to address the state’s maternal and infant health crisis. Since its inception, Nurture NJ has seen over 65 pieces of maternal and infant health legislation signed by Governor Murphy. The initiative has also developed and implemented groundbreaking programs and policies, such as the first-of-its-kind in the nation Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (MIHIA), which is tasked with overseeing the groundbreaking New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center based in Trenton, and will be the arm of government that continues the vital work of Nurture NJ past the Murphy Administration. As a result of these efforts, New Jersey has moved from 47th to 28th in the nation for maternal mortality.

Under First Lady Murphy’s leadership, Nurture NJ has made significant policy achievements including: developing the Nurture NJ Maternal and Infant Health Strategic Plan – of which over half of its more than 80 recommendations have been started or completed; becoming the second state to expand Medicaid coverage to 365 days postpartum; establishing Medicaid reimbursement for doula care; increasing all perinatal Medicaid provider reimbursements to 100 percent of Medicare rates; and launching the most robust-in-the-nation universal nurse home visitation program so 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 innovative policies and more, Nurture NJ has positioned New Jersey as a national leader in the fight against the maternal and infant health crisis.

Governor Phil Murphy

[Home \(/governor/\)](#)

Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about\)](/governor/admin/about)

[Lt. Governor Tahesha Way \(/governor/admin/lt\)](/governor/admin/lt)

[In memoriam of Lt. Governor Sheila Y. Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt-sheila-y-oliver\)](/governor/admin/lt-sheila-y-oliver)

[Senior Staff \(/governor/admin/staff\)](/governor/admin/staff)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet\)](/governor/admin/cabinet)

[Office of Climate Action and the Green Economy \(/governor/climateaction/\)](/governor/climateaction/)

[Office of Equity \(/governor/admin/equity/\)](/governor/admin/equity/)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency \(/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml\)](/governor/admin/affordablehealthcare/index.shtml)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities \(/governor/admin/bca\)](/governor/admin/bca)

[New Jersey Puerto Rico Commission \(https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/\)](https://www.nj.gov/puertoricocommission/)

[Internship Opportunities \(/governor/admin/internship.shtml\)](/governor/admin/internship.shtml)

[Governor's Fellows Program \(/governor/admin/fellows\)](/governor/admin/fellows)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Environment)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

News & Events

[Press Releases \(/governor/news/news/562024/approved/news_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562024/approved/news_archive.shtml)

[Photos \(https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy\)](https://www.flickr.com/photos/govmurphy)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/news/addresses\)](/governor/news/addresses)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html\)](/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo_archive.html)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/ao/approved/ao_archive.shtml)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/news/appointments\)](/governor/news/appointments)

[Advice and Consent Appointments \(/governor/news/acappointments\)](/governor/news/acappointments)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/statements/approved/statements_archive.shtml)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/adminreports/approved/archive.shtml)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/reports/approved/reports_archive.shtml)

[Press Kits \(/governor/news/press\)](/governor/news/press)

Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

Contact Us

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling/\)](/governor/contact/scheduling/)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/all/\)](/governor/contact/all/)

Statewide

[NJ Home \(//www.nj.gov\)](//www.nj.gov)

[Services A to Z \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

[Departments/Agencies \(//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/gov/deptserv/)

[FAQs \(//www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](//www.nj.gov/faqs/)

[Contact Us \(//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

[Privacy Notice \(//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

[Legal Statement & Disclaimers \(//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

[Accessibility Statement \(//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](//www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

(//nj.gov/opra/)

(https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2024
Office of Governor PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000

(https://tech.nj.gov/)