

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Historic Legislation to Expand and Protect Reproductive Freedom in New Jersey

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*Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act Codifies Reproductive Choice into State Law*

**TEANECK** – Governor Phil Murphy, alongside Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, former Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, Senate President Nicholas Scutari, former Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, and Alexis McGill Johnson, President of the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, and many other legislative sponsors and advocates, today signed the historic Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act (S49/A6260), which codifies the constitutional right to freedom of reproductive choice in New Jersey. Governor Murphy also signed S413/A4698, which expands the contraception coverage required under private insurance and Medicaid from a 6-month supply to a 12-month supply.

These laws expand and protect reproductive freedom in New Jersey at a time when the U.S. Supreme Court considers whether to limit or overturn the ruling in *Roe v. Wade*. With this legislation, if *Roe v. Wade* were overturned, the right to reproductive choice would be protected in New Jersey.

“In New Jersey, we trust each individual person to make their reproductive choices for themselves,” **said Governor Murphy**. “With *Roe v. Wade* under attack, today’s historic legislation makes clear that New Jersey’s position in supporting the right to reproductive choice remains protected. Together, with expanding contraception coverage, these two pieces of legislation serve to meaningfully and tangibly increase access to reproductive health care, and ensure that New Jersey residents are now, and will remain, in control of their reproductive choices.”

“Reproductive health and the ability for women to make medical decisions about their own bodies are fundamental rights that should never be taken away. Today, we are codifying those rights into law in New Jersey,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver**. “I want to thank the legislators who have championed this bill and Governor Murphy for signing it into law. Women’s rights are human rights and will always be respected and protected in New Jersey.”

“Today is a historic day for reproductive health in the Garden State,” **said Alexis McGill Johnson, president of Planned Parenthood Action Fund**. “By ensuring that reproductive health decisions – about birth control, abortion, and pregnancy – are protected in state law, New Jersey has taken an important step forward for reproductive freedom. We are grateful for the constant advocacy by the governor, legislative champions, Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey, the Thrive New Jersey Coalition, and more to ensure the state met the moment and secured access to essential health care in the state. At a time when access to reproductive health care is under attack across the country, New Jersey has shown what it means to stand up for its residents. Planned Parenthood is eager to continue working to ensure that abortion is not only a right, but accessible for all New Jerseyans, regardless of their immigration status, insurance coverage, or income.”

Primary sponsors for S49/A6260 include former Senate Majority Leader Weinberg, former Senate President Steve Sweeney, and Senators Greenstein and Gopal. Assembly sponsors include former Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, and Assemblymembers Mila Jasey and Raj Mukherji.

“With a woman’s right to choose under *Roe v. Wade* under attack in the U.S. Supreme Court, it is critical that we have enacted legislation rooted in the New Jersey Constitution that clearly and unequivocally protects freedom of reproductive choice, including the right to access contraception, the right to terminate a pregnancy, and the right to carry a pregnancy to term,” **said former Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, who was the lead sponsor of the bill**.

[Back to top](#)

"January 22<sup>nd</sup> is the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. With the enactment of S49 into law, the Legislature and the Governor are sending a clear message to the nation that in New Jersey, a woman's right to choose is, and will remain, a fundamental right," **said former Senate President Steve Sweeney, a prime sponsor of the bill.** "I was proud to join Senator Weinberg in fighting to ensure that the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act would become law."

"Enacting the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act into statute will help protect the reproductive rights of women in New Jersey against the potential reversal by the United States Supreme Court. It is rooted in the State Constitution, consistent with decisions by the New Jersey Supreme Court and written to safeguard the fundamental right of women to make their own decisions on reproductive care. We will not allow these rights to be lost to forces outside the state that run counter to the core beliefs of the people of New Jersey, including the principle of equal treatment for women by insurance companies. Coverage for contraceptives should be granted the same level of importance as other prescriptions. These laws enshrine protections and make progress for women in New Jersey," **said Senate President Nicholas Scutari.**

"The Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act is a comprehensive bill that guarantees women will continue to have the right to make their own personal decisions on their reproductive care, regardless of how the U.S. Supreme Court rules," **said Senator Linda Greenstein.**

"A person's right of reproductive choice, in effect a right of control over one's own body, remains a fundamental right enshrined in our Constitution," **said Senator Vin Gopal.** "This law, the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act, will protect this basic freedom under New Jersey statute and ensure individual choice on when and whether to have children in a time and place that is compatible with their lifestyles and beliefs. Self-determination is one of the founding principles of this state and this nation. That principle should and must extend to any person in New Jersey regarding reproductive rights."

"Everyone has the right to reproductive choice, yet there have been far too many attempts throughout our country to control the decisions a person can make in that regard. Legal challenges to the reproductive rights of Americans, which have steadily increased in recent years, threaten to limit access to family planning services. This act will promote the health and well-being of the people in our state while showing the country that New Jersey stands for compassion, dignity and freedom," **said Assemblymembers Vainieri Huttle, Jasey, and Mukherji.**

Primary sponsors for S413/A4698 include Senators Shirley Turner and Teresa Ruiz, as well as former Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, and Assemblymembers Mila Jasey and Raj Mukherji.

"With a woman's right to safely choose to end an unwanted pregnancy now being threatened, we must counter that threat by putting the policies in place that help to protect the health of women," **said Senator Shirley Turner.** "This law will make it easier for women to access contraceptives to prevent pregnancy from happening in the first place, which is one of the best ways to help women maintain control over their own bodies and their lives."

"Many other medications are available to order long term supplies to ensure individuals are able to take them without interruption. Unfortunately, insurance companies are not always willing to cover a 12-month supply of birth control," **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz.** "There is no reason contraceptives should not be granted the same level of importance as other prescriptions. This law will ensure residents are able to get their medication in a manner that is conducive to their schedule."

"Prescription contraceptives safeguard the mental and physical health of countless women by giving them more control over their lives," **said former Assemblywoman Valerie Vainieri Huttle, Assemblywoman Mila Jasey and Assemblyman Raj Mukherji.** "Ensuring coverage of these prescriptions for up to 12 months will allow more New Jerseyans to prepare ahead. Making it easier and more likely for women to access birth control is a crucial component of the family planning services our state is taking steps to protect."

"Access to reproductive health care and a woman's right to choose are fundamental rights in New Jersey," **said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli.** "Now more than ever, the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act is crucial."

"Today's historic legislation affirms the dignity and bodily autonomy of every New Jerseyan," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy.** "Further, expanding access to and affordability of reproductive health care, including contraception, is an essential part of our efforts to solve our state's maternal health crisis. I am incredibly proud to see New Jersey take this important step forward."

"With Governor Murphy's signature today, New Jersey reaffirmed and protected the right to abortion," **said ACLU-NJ Executive Director Amol Sinha.** "In light of ongoing attacks on reproductive rights across the country, codifying a declaration of strong, unwavering rights is crucial. However, far too many New Jerseyans remain unable to access this

fundamental right. We urge our state's leaders, through legislation and regulatory action, to not only affirm reproductive freedom, but make it truly accessible by lifting financial barriers to ensure we do not leave any communities behind."

"Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey applauds the strong declaration of reproductive rights in S49/A6260, as well as the expansion of birth control access through S413/A4698," **said Kaitlyn Wojtowicz, Vice President of Public Affairs, Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey.** "This new legislation ensures decisions about contraception, abortion, and carrying a pregnancy to term are protected in state statute. This is a day of celebration in New Jersey. The work is far from over, and we look forward to continuing our advocacy alongside Governor Murphy to ensure that every New Jerseyan can access the reproductive health care they need."

"If we are to achieve equality of the sexes, we must trust women and allow them to control their reproductive cycles without governmental interference," **said Anjali Mehrotra, President, National Organization for Women of New Jersey.** "Access to comprehensive reproductive health care allows women to plan out their lives, enabling them to pursue education and career opportunities, which leads to increased workforce attachment and wages over time. The codification of the right to abortion in statute is good for women, it is good for families, it is good for business, it is good for New Jersey."

"Abortion care is just as much about economic justice as it is about reproductive freedom," **said Sheila Reynertson, Senior Policy Analyst, New Jersey Policy Perspective.** "The reality is that, for far too many families, carrying an unplanned pregnancy can have devastating financial consequences. One's future plans are put at risk, like going to college or building a career. It's no surprise that those who cannot access this time-sensitive care are more likely to live in poverty, raise children alone, and struggle to afford basic needs. We thank Governor Murphy and the bill sponsors for taking a stand in support of reproductive autonomy, and we look forward to working with the administration on ways to improve access to abortion care for all."

"BlueWaveNJ celebrates New Jersey's passage of the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act," **said Marcia Marley, President of BlueWave.** "It is a strong statement guaranteeing the full range of reproductive rights, including abortion, passed at a time when other states are eliminating or threatening these rights. We are deeply grateful to Governor Murphy, his staff, and legislators –particularly Senator Loretta Weinberg– for their tenacity in the negotiations. Does this bill have everything New Jersey needs? No, but it represents an important and essential foundation we can build on. BlueWaveNJ looks forward to continuing to work with the administration and the legislature to ensure that everyone in our state can access and afford all reproductive services."

"The National Council of Jewish Women, New Jersey Sections, (NCJW-NJ) applaud the passage of S49/A6260, *Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act*, which codifies in statute the full array of reproductive rights, including abortion, and thanks Governor Murphy for his steadfast support," **said the National Council of Jewish Women, New Jersey Sections.** "While personal autonomy and decision-making is a priority, so is the care of others to ensure that their access to these rights is unimpeded. To this end, NCJW- NJ looks forward to working with the Governor and all legislators to pass needed equity and access provisions."

"As independent abortion providers who have served our community for over forty years, and now, through a pandemic, Cherry Hill Women's Center recognizes that the passage of the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act is a historic moment for the people in our state, the patients who we care for every day. Today, New Jerseyans who can become pregnant will no longer question our right to make fundamental decisions about our health, our lives, and our futures," **said Roxanne Sutocky, Director of Community Engagement for Cherry Hill Women's Center.** "Every day our fierce and fearless team of dedicated caregivers provides excellent abortion services and are called to guide our patients as they navigate the financial and logistical barriers blocking their ability to exercise their reproductive rights. We appreciate the efforts of the legislature and the Governor to pass this historic legislation and we call on these representatives to do more to eliminate the remaining barriers which fall hardest on people working to make ends meet, people living in rural areas, undocumented people, and LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities disproportionately impacted by systemic racism and reproductive oppression."

## 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 \(/governor/news/news/562023/approved/news\\_archive.shtml\)](/governor/news/news/562023/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)

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