



## Governor Phil Murphy

[Home](#) [Administration ▼](#) [Key Initiatives ▼](#) [News and Events ▼](#) [Social ▼](#) [Contact Us ▼](#)



# Newark, N.J.

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislative Package to Combat New Jersey's Maternal and Infant Health Crisis

05/8/2019

**NEWARK** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed a legislative package into law to combat New Jersey's maternal and infant health crisis. The series of bills, which will support the efforts of the Administration's Nurture NJ campaign, will improve health outcomes for New Jersey's mothers and babies, as well as address racial disparities in maternal and infant care.

"By enacting these measures today, New Jersey is making a strong statement that every mother, every birth, and every child matters," **said Governor Phil Murphy**. "I am proud to sign these bills into law and commend my partners in the Legislature for their commitment to improve the health and safety of New Jersey's women, children, and families."

"Empowering mothers and ensuring their voices reverberate through the health care system is a vital piece of improving maternal and infant health outcomes in New Jersey," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Through Nurture NJ, and now through today's legislation, we are continuing forward on a path to make New Jersey the safest place in the country to give birth."

The Governor signed the following four bills into law:

- **S1784 (Weinberg, Gill/Pintor Marin, Jimenez, Sumter)** – Provides Medicaid coverage for doula care.
- **S3365 (Pou, Cryan/Mosquera, Taliaferro, Benson)** – Establishes perinatal episode of care pilot program in Medicaid.
- **S3378 (Ruiz, Greenstein/McKnight, Mukherji, Huttie)** – Prohibits health benefits coverage for certain non-medically indicated early elective deliveries under Medicaid program, SHBP, and SEHBP.
- **S3406 (Kean, Vitale/Lampitt, Pintor Marin, Mosquera)** – Codifies current practice regarding completion of Perinatal Risk Assessment form by certain Medicaid health care providers.

"As a nation that strives to be the best, our maternal mortality rate, especially among minority women, is an embarrassment. We can and should do more to protect moms and their babies. These bills demonstrate the strong commitment New Jersey has to mothers and families and will likely serve as a model for the rest of the nation in addressing maternal mortality," **said U.S. Senator Bob Menendez, a senior member of the Senate Finance Committee that sets national health policy**. "I am pleased to support programs that help new moms and babies at the federal level and look forward to working with the Governor in improving health care for all of our state's

[Back to top](#)

residents."

"It is unacceptable that New Jersey has the unfortunate distinction of having one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the country, and a racial gap in maternal health outcomes that is wider than the national average," **U.S. Senator Cory Booker said**. "Fixing this reality is not a matter of 'can we?', it's about 'will we.' Our Governor and legislative leaders deserve tremendous credit for moving rapidly to improve the maternal and infant care outcomes in our state and build the collective will to get this done."

"Under the leadership of Governor Murphy, First Lady Murphy and the Legislature, New Jersey has made improving maternal and infant health a top priority," **said New Jersey Department of Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson**. "The legislation signed into law today represents critical steps in advancing our goal of eliminating the unacceptable disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes in our State. At the Department of Human Services, we look forward to implementing these new laws including adding doula services to our Medicaid program as proposed in the Governor's budget."

"With the signing of these bills, Governor Murphy is demonstrating New Jersey's leadership in addressing disparities in maternity care in our state," **said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal**. "We are changing the healthcare system to ensure more women have a chance for a healthy birth and healthy infant—and importantly, breaking the back of shameful disparities for black mothers along the way."

"These are some of the most vulnerable women in our state, women who are often without any options for health insurance beyond Medicaid," **said Senator Loretta Weinberg**. "By covering doula care under Medicaid we are giving support, advocacy and comfort to women in some of their most vulnerable moments of life. This law is going to help countless women each year make strong, supported and informed decisions throughout their pregnancy."

"Doulas help expecting mothers to gain a better understanding of the procedures and possible complications of pregnancy and delivery. They work to ensure the patient's wishes are carried out during birth and immediately after," **said Senator Nia Gill**. "They provide comfort during labor with breathing and relaxation techniques. They do all of this and more, making their value to a new mother vital and undeniable."

"It's clear, we in New Jersey need to take the care of our mothers and soon to be mothers seriously, and we need to start today," **said Senator Nellie Pou**. "With over 40 percent of New Jersey births being paid for by Medicaid, we have a major opportunity to impact the efficiency of services and at the same time, find better ways to provide mothers and their babies with the care they need in the most effective way possible. Today, I am proud to put mothers first in our state."

"By securing federal funding to address maternal mental health we can make real progress to improve the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and new mothers," **said Senator Joseph P. Cryan**. "Postpartum depression and similar mental health changes during pregnancy are not uncommon, but they often go undiagnosed and untreated. These are very treatable conditions if women and their families are offered the care that can make a significant difference at an important time in their lives as parents or as expecting parents. A pilot program will show that we will make use to make use of federal resources to get this done."

"Early deliveries present health risks for both mothers and their newborns which is why it is crucial they are only performed when it is absolutely necessary. Hospitals should not be inducing labor or preforming C-sections simply because the mother requests it, or because it is convenient to the provider or the facility," **said Senate President Pro Tempore M. Teresa Ruiz**. "We need to do everything in our wherewithal to protect New Jersey families."

"Electing to induce labor for a non-medical purpose increases the health risks of both the mother and newborn, while also potentially leading to inflated medical costs," **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. "This is a personal choice of the mother that is not recommended by medical professionals and removing this coverage will provide lower health benefits costs to consumers."

"Information gathered by the Perinatal Risk Assessment form is critical to alerting patients and providers to potential risk factors that may affect the outcomes of a pregnancy," **said Senator Joseph F. Vitale**. "It is an extremely valuable tool to make sure soon-to-be mothers are aware of and are connected to services they need to ensure a healthy pregnancy."

"No one, especially a newborn or their mother, should lose their life as a result of a preventable complication," **said Senate Minority Leader Tom Kean**. "Unfortunately, that's happening all too often in our state, and around the country. By analyzing Medicaid data, we can better identify risk factors and break down barriers to care that are putting women and children in harm's way. This law will help close the racial disparity gap in this area, build stronger families, and save lives."

"Many women are finding comfort in the support of a doula during their pregnancies," **said Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin**. "A doula provides emotional, physical, and educational support to a mother who is expecting, is experiencing labor, or has recently given birth. Their care has often been said to help reduce pregnancy complications. It is critically important for doula care, which has increasingly grown in popularity for pregnant

women, to be covered under Medicaid.

“With the maternal and child death rate at an all-time high in the state and nation, we must do everything we can for the women of New Jersey to ensure that their prenatal period, before and after, are as healthy and seamless as possible,” **said Assemblywoman Angelica Jimenez**. “Moms now rely on the birthing assistance provided through doula services. It has proven to be immensely successful and should, without question, be included in Medicaid coverage.”

“Doulas have become an integral part in the fight to reduce the black mother and infant mortality rates. Just recently, the New Jersey Department of Health deployed 40 doula outreach workers as part of the ‘Healthy Women, Healthy Families Program,” **said Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter**. “Providing the option of doula services will meet the crucial need for increased birthing support of underserved women throughout New Jersey. This type of support should not be available to the privileged few who can pay for the extra help. We can save more families by expanding access to doula services.”

**Assemblymembers Gabiriela Mosquera, Adam Taliaferro, and Daniel Benson issued the following joint statement:** “Modeled after similar programs, such as the successful one in Tennessee, this pilot will foster collaboration between Medicaid managed organizations, federally qualified health centers and maternity healthcare providers for the common goal of improving perinatal health outcomes and decreasing costs.

“There will be, however, a greater level of accountability for the cost of care that they deliver to their patients. While these healthcare providers will have the same administrative and financial relationship with payers, they will receive higher payments if they meet or exceed certain benchmarks for quality.

“This pilot is an innovative approach using value-based payments, one of the first in New Jersey. It incentivizes Medicaid providers to raise the bar for providing better care--a real win for Medicaid patients.”

“The Perinatal Risk Assessment form helps providers identify risks during pregnancy and prevent health conditions that may cause complications for a new mother,” **said Assemblywoman Pamela Lampitt**. “To improve maternal health outcomes in New Jersey, doctors need to know the risks that may warrant intervention and further care. Making this a standard of care for Medicaid health providers will protect many at-risk women.”

“The PRA forms help health care providers collect certain demographic, medical, and psychosocial information about Medicaid-eligible pregnant women in New Jersey,” **said Assemblywoman Eliana Pintor Marin**. “In order to identify prenatal risk factors early in the pregnancy, provide referrals to evidence-based home visiting programs, including the doula program recently signed into law, providers must know the mother’s health history. This information is crucial to helping us improve maternal health services and pregnancy outcomes for all women.”

“Perinatal risk assessments are a critical part of the care provided to women and their babies, especially during their first pregnancies,” **said Assemblywoman Gabriela Mosquera**. “Requiring these assessments as a part of the state’s maternal healthcare system will help to ensure we maintain a higher standard of care in our hospitals for many New Jersey mothers.”

## Governor Phil Murphy

### Home

### Administration

Governor Phil Murphy

Lt. Governor Sheila

Oliver

First Lady Tammy

Snyder Murphy

Cabinet

### Key Initiatives

Economy & Jobs

Education

Environment

Health

Law & Justice

Transportation

### News & Events

### Social

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

Snapchat

YouTube

### Contact Us

## Statewide

NJ Home

Services A to Z

Departments/Agencies

FAQs

Contact Us

Privacy Notice

Legal Statement &

Disclaimers

Accessibility Statement

Boards, Commissions &  
Authorities  
Internship Opportunities  
Governor’s Residence -  
Drumthwacket

---

Press Releases  
Public Addresses  
Executive Orders  
Statements on  
Legislation  
Administration Reports  
Transition Reports  
Press Kits

Scheduling Requests  
Contact Us



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

*powered by* **njoit**