

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Support for Key Environmental Justice Legislation

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TRENTON – Standing alongside Senator Troy Singleton, Assemblyman John McKeon, and environmental advocates Kim Gaddy, Dr. Nicky Sheats, and Dr. Ana Baptiste, Governor Phil Murphy today announced his support for key environmental justice legislation for overburdened communities. The legislation (S232) requires the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to evaluate environmental and public health impacts of certain facilities on overburdened communities when reviewing certain permit applications.

“Pursuing an aggressive environmental justice agenda has been a top priority of my Administration,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Decades of inaction have led to environmental disparities throughout the state, creating overburdened communities that are unjustly exposed to significant air and water pollutants. We must prevent further environmental burdens on residents in our urban, rural, and low-income areas, which are predominantly communities of color. By supporting this legislation, we are taking a momentous step forward in achieving that goal.”

“Despite New Jersey’s many environmental gains, our state has a long history of environmental pollutants disproportionately affecting our disadvantaged communities. It has been weighing them down for decades,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. “We have seen the impact that environmental inequality has had on our residents’ quality of life and health. The legislation proposed by Senator Singleton, Assemblyman McKeon and our Administration would create a new layer of protection for the communities that have paid the price for pollution that is created by us all.”

“In the last fifty years, many federal and state environmental laws have enabled us to make great strides in improving the quality of our air, land and water, but gaps in the law too often prevent us from ensuring environmental justice for our low-income and minority communities,” **said New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Catherine R. McCabe**. “While environmental laws broadly protect public health and the environment, they too often fail to account for the fact that facilities that cause some of the worst pollution tend to be concentrated in low-income and minority communities, leading to disparities in exposure and in public health in those communities. I applaud Senator Singleton and Assemblyman McKeon for their leadership and attention to this injustice. Nowhere else in the country has a commitment to environmental justice been this strong. I hope others will follow New Jersey’s lead, and pledge my support to our communities to help bring this law to Governor Murphy’s desk.”

The bill would require the Department of Environmental Protection to evaluate the environmental and public health impacts of the following facilities on overburdened communities when reviewing the following permit applications:

- major sources of air pollution (i.e., gas fired power plants and cogeneration facilities);
- resource recovery facilities or incinerators; sludge processing facilities;
- sewage treatment plants with a capacity of more than 50 million gallons per day;

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- transfer stations or solid waste facilities;
- recycling facilities that receive at least 100 tons of recyclable material per day;
- scrap metal facilities;
- landfills; or
- medical waste incinerators.

The bill defines an overburdened community as any community where 35 percent of the households qualify as low-income according to the U.S. Census, 40 percent of households are minority, or 40 percent of households have limited English proficiency. There are approximately 310 municipalities with populations totaling approximately 4,489,000 that have overburdened communities within their municipalities.

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senator Troy Singleton and Assemblyman John McKeon.

"In order to achieve environmental justice, we must address the most egregious imbalances that result from those with more financial resources and louder political voices crowding out those who are bereft of both," **said Senator Troy Singleton**. "The legislation that we have worked on for the last several years is a longstanding attempt to correct this issue and to finally add some definition and practical action to the fight for environmental justice in our state. The time to act is now – this is our opportunity to turn this pivotal moment in our country's history into a movement that will create a more fair and just society."

"The concentration of energy, water and waste management infrastructure near urban cities has been a longstanding issue; one that has left neighboring communities disproportionately impacted and exposed to pollutants to an unimaginable detriment," **said Assemblyman John McKeon**. "An overhaul of the way infrastructure gets approved and built, and systemic reform that puts people and communities directly at the heart of decision-making is what New Jersey needs. This legislation will help get us there."

"Clean air and clean water shouldn't be luxuries for the privileged, yet every day, communities of color, low income communities, and indigenous communities in New Jersey and across our nation disproportionately face environmental hazards and harmful pollutants," **said U.S. Senator Cory Booker, who introduced sweeping legislation in the U.S. Senate to address environmental injustices**. "We cannot achieve social justice or economic justice in this country without simultaneously addressing environmental justice. I will continue to lead the charge in the U.S. Senate to address these injustices and protect our most vulnerable communities, and I applaud Senator Singleton, Assemblyman McKeon, Governor Murphy, and New Jersey's EJ advocates for their efforts to do the same."

"We need legislation that addresses cumulative impacts in order to protect New Jersey environmental justice communities from disproportionate amounts of pollution," **said Nicky Sheats, Esq., Ph.D., New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance**. "Cumulative impacts legislation that not only addresses this issue in an appropriate manner, but actually calls for the State to reject applications for pollution permits under certain circumstances, is critically important to the health of environmental justice communities and long overdue."

"The Ironbound Community in Newark has struggled for decades to fight against the unfair pollution burden harming residents' health," **said Maria Lopez-Nuñez, Deputy Director, Organizing and Advocacy, Ironbound Community Corporation**. "S232 gives our communities a fighting chance. It gives us a voice that says no more to the places that make it harder to breathe. This bill is the realization of generations demanding environmental justice. We are proud to stand next to NJEJA and Clean Water Action, and thank Governor Murphy and Senator Singleton for putting S232 forth."

"As we celebrate Juneteenth today and the freedom of Black people, it is necessary to free residents in front line communities, like mine, from the environmental and related health injustices we suffer each and every day," **stated Kim Gaddy, Newark resident and Environmental Justice Organizer, Clean Water Action**. "All three of my children are asthmatic and if S232 becomes law as written, the state will have the power to 'just say no more' polluting facilities in my neighborhood. Governor Murphy and Senator Singleton are not just

demonstrating their commitment to S232, but building momentum for its passage, bringing us that much closer to having the strongest EJ law in the nation. Environmental justice communities like mine have suffered for far too long because of the zip code we live in."

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