

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order Transitioning the Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency and the Health Care Affordability, Responsibility, and Transparency (HART) Program to the Department of Health

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TRENTON – As part of his commitment to make health care more affordable for all New Jerseyans, Governor Phil Murphy today signed Executive Order No. 377, directing the Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency (Office) to be continued and reestablished within the Department of Health, and transitioning leadership of the Health Care Affordability, Responsibility, and Transparency (HART) Program from the Department of Banking and Insurance to the Department of Health. The goal of the move is to support sustainable and continued implementation of the Administration’s consumer-focused health care affordability work.

With this transition, the Governor is also announcing that Shabnam Salih, the Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency’s inaugural director, is stepping down.

“The Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency, under the unwavering leadership of Shabnam Salih, has been a fighting force for the pocketbooks of New Jersey residents since its inception. The Office has spearheaded our Administration’s efforts to put affordable health care in reach for more families in our state, working across agencies to ensure members of our communities do not have to choose between making ends meet and affording life-saving medical care and prescription drugs,” **said Governor Murphy**. “In its new home at the Department of Health, the Office will continue its important mission of expanding access to high-quality, affordable health care by reducing consumer health care costs, making insurance more affordable, and improving price transparency.”

“Over the past seven years, Shabnam has been an extraordinary resource and a champion for working families in our state. Her dedication to making health care more accessible and affordable for New Jerseyans has amounted to numerous undeniable successes – including the abolishment of \$220 million in medical debt for 127,000 residents, the establishment of safeguards against accumulating medical debt, and the creation of caps on out-of-pocket costs for certain prescription drugs,” **Governor Murphy continued**. “I thank Shabnam for her years of service, starting with her work as one of my first Policy Advisors, and wish her nothing but continued success in all of her future endeavors.”

“It has been a tremendous honor to serve Governor Murphy, the First Lady, and the people of New Jersey over the last seven years to advance the Governor’s agenda for a stronger and fairer New Jersey. I thank the Governor for trusting me to advance his vision for more affordable, quality health care for New Jerseyans and I am proud of the consumer-focused policies the Office has enacted under the Governor’s leadership. But this work must continue and with today’s announcement, we ensure this future commitment for all residents,” **said Shabnam Salih, outgoing director of the Office**.

The Governor established the Office in 2020 to address rising health care costs for all residents in the state. Since its implementation, the Office has worked with agencies across the administration, industry leaders, and policy and

consumer advocates to identify opportunities to advance health care affordability and ensure accessibility for all residents. Following its transition to the Department of Health, the Office will operate under the Health Systems Branch.

"We are excited to continue our commitment, alongside our sister agencies, to improving affordability and accessibility of health care in New Jersey. This work is centered on equity and ensuring that affordable health care is within reach for every resident in our state," **said New Jersey Department of Health Commissioner Kaitlan Baston, MD, MSc, DFASAM.** "Thank you to Shabnam for her invaluable support and leadership. Her efforts have been instrumental in shaping our collective progress and positioning New Jersey to take this important work to the next level."

"The Department has worked with the Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency (OHCAT) to better understand the drivers behind the rising costs of health care and promote ways to help make it more affordable for our residents. The Department is grateful for OHCAT's partnership on these critical issues and in the work that has driven policy changes for the benefit of New Jersey residents," **said New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance Commissioner Justin Zimmerman.** "Access and affordability are key to improving New Jersey's health care landscape, and that important mission will remain under this office and with the Health Care Affordability Responsibility and Transparency (HART) Program. Shabnam's commitment to bettering the lives of others will continue and we wish her all the best. The Department also looks forward to partnering with the Department of Health as it takes the helm of this important office and program."

The Office's work includes collaborating with the Department of Banking and Insurance to establish the HART Program, a cost growth benchmarking effort with the goal of keeping health care costs from growing faster than the state's economy or the pocketbooks of its residents. The HART Program released the first set of annual reports ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/z4ry6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmDxXuiCs\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/z4ry6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmDxXuiCs$)), earlier this year. The Program is working on the next set of annual reports to continue building our collective understanding of health care costs and their key drivers.

The Office provided critical leadership to help the Administration institute other important consumer-focused policies like a nation-leading legislative package ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/fxy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmPqsrkX-\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/fxy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmPqsrkX-$)), advancing prescription drug affordability, which includes caps on out-of-pocket costs for insulin and asthma inhalers; innovative reforms promoting transparency in the pharmaceutical supply chain; and necessary oversight of pharmaceutical benefits management companies. The Office has also advanced a set of critical protections for New Jerseyans against medical debt, including the prohibition of credit reporting for most medical debts ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/vpty6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmHDxx3Am\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/vpty6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmHDxx3Am$)), and has worked with Undue Medical Debt ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/biuy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmNQ5djUAS\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/biuy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmNQ5djUAS$)) to provide direct consumer relief against medical debt, having eliminated more than \$220 million in debt thus far ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/ravy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmAONg1s7\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/ravy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmAONg1s7$)).

Under Executive Order No. 377, the Health Care Affordability Interagency Working Group, previously established by Executive Order No. 217 (2021) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/72vy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmDm_cmKV\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/72vy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmDm_cmKV$)), will be chaired by the Commissioner of the Department of Health or a designee. Many of the functions assigned to the Department of Banking and Insurance under Executive Order No. 277 (2021) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/nvwy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmPQgbuor\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/nvwy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!IAOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmPQgbuor$)) will be reassigned to the Department of Health, and both departments will coordinate to ensure the successful transition and implementation of the HART program.

The Governor also supports the development and passage of legislation to codify benchmarking efforts and looks forward to working with legislators, consumer advocates, industry leaders, and other stakeholders to ensure this critical work continues.

For a copy of Executive Order No. 377, click [here](https://urldefense.com/v3/https://t.e2ma.net/click/jkhcxm/nrddit/3nxy6ab_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!!AOjmU9URzRJM2e-eMBFfCXzocJ0vMCOuVklrfse5NwNrfkZXjdgnK_e6_Dqg9TC4t1QypVKdEfp375tpKjmHXvq69U$)
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Governor Phil Murphy

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