

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Highlights Ongoing Efforts to Strengthen Food Security in New Jersey

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FY2023 Budget Dedicates \$85 million to New Jersey's Six Largest Food Banks

HILLSIDE – Governor Phil Murphy today joined members of his Administration, government officials, and advocates to highlight ongoing efforts to address food insecurity on behalf of families throughout New Jersey as part of the Governor's commitment to making life more affordable for residents. Efforts to strengthen food security include the enactment of legislation, inclusion of funding in the State budget, and the creation of a first-in-the-nation Office of the Food Security Advocate. From its outset, the Murphy Administration has secured historic increases in funding for New Jersey food banks, including an additional \$65 million in Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023). A total of \$85 million was dedicated in the FY2023 budget to support the critical work of New Jersey's six largest food banks.

"The holiday season is a poignant reminder of the many New Jersey families struggling to put food on the table every day," said **Governor Murphy**. "As my Administration continues to pursue ways in which we can make life more affordable on behalf of New Jersey families, combating food insecurity will remain a critical part of those efforts. Alongside dedicated community and legislative partners, including food security champion Speaker Craig J. Coughlin, my Administration remains committed to working to strengthen food security to ensure that no one in our state goes hungry."

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture oversees the distribution of funding and provides support to food banks, in addition to administering various food and nutrition programs on behalf of residents.

When COVID-19 exacerbated food insecurity throughout the state, additional assistance was provided to struggling families and the organizations supporting them.

Since the start of the pandemic, the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS) has issued nearly \$1.3 billion through the Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/bq0880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhw7xNgDJw\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/bq0880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhw7xNgDJw$)) program, which helps families purchase food for their children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals at school but missed meal(s) due to a COVID-19-related absence. These benefits are also available to families with children under the age of 6 who are eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and attend child care but miss in-person care due to COVID-19.

DHS has also distributed nearly \$2 billion in additional monthly SNAP payments to help low-income families afford food and other essentials. New Jersey is the first state to set a SNAP minimum benefit of \$50, which required an \$18 million investment in State funds.

This year, DHS also forgave debt for certain families previously enrolled in public benefit programs, like SNAP, as consistent with federal rules. The intent of the initiative was to help ease the financial burden this debt posed for thousands of families and allow them to achieve greater economic stability.

Additional pandemic-related assistance includes the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's (NJEDA) Sustain and Serve NJ ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/ri1880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhw3iJ5iAg\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/ri1880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhw3iJ5iAg$)) program – which gives non-profits funding to purchase meals from restaurants recovering from the impacts of the pandemic in order to distribute those meals to people in their communities for free – thereby supporting both local businesses and residents in need of food assistance. So far, over 3.7 million meals have been purchased from over 440 different restaurants throughout the state.

The NJEDA has also created a Food Security Planning Grant Program ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/7a2880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhwBOPQj\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/7a2880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhwBOPQj$)) to provide up to \$125,000 to local governments to create plans to transform abandoned/vacant properties in one of New Jersey's 50 food deserts into a way to improve food security, such as through a new grocery store, urban agriculture, or some other project. Applications for this program have been extended to December 20, 2022.

In partnership with the Legislature, the Governor has signed a number of bills to help combat food insecurity. Two bills ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/n32880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhw-8kVO2V\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/n32880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhw-8kVO2V$)) signed in September 2022 will require schools to provide free breakfasts and lunches to students from working-class, middle-income families and require school food authorities to help make parents aware of existing and expanded school meal programs through public education campaigns.

The Governor also signed a comprehensive legislative package ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/3v3880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhwzfl9z_q\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/3v3880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhwzfl9z_q$)) into law in September 2021 to expand access to the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), raise awareness about SNAP benefits, bolster school meal programs, and establish the Office of the Food Insecurity Advocate. The ongoing mission of this office ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/jo4880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhwZG-UOz\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcigni/7ys5259b/jo4880_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtBA!NbG5-BVGvS75w4_Wds05M7phVRPdwF7fxBT5dYFFBp5xvq9IUh560BHmEjWr1SfPKZHvYkDKa1a6arMhwZG-UOz$)) is to coordinate the administration of New Jersey's food insecurity programs, advocate for individuals facing food insecurity, and develop new policy initiatives to help the State combat hunger and facilitate greater access to food relief programs.

"New Jersey's food banks are so essential in providing meals and critical support to food insecure residents in their time of need," said **New Jersey Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher**. "This funding will play a significant role to ensure emergency feeding organizations have the resources they need. In addition, in the agreements signed with our food banks, they will be providing thousands of additional pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables secured from our local New Jersey farmers."

"The Murphy Administration has made significant investments to fight hunger and support families facing food insecurity," said **Department of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. "Human Services has delivered more than \$3 billion in additional food assistance to SNAP households since the height of the pandemic. We have also enhanced access to nutritious food by allowing online SNAP grocery shopping, made it easier for individuals to manage their benefits through the ConnectEBT mobile app, and have increased SNAP outreach and application assistance in the community. Yet there is still more work to be done, and with our partners across government, in the legislature and in the community, we will continue the fight to ensure all families in New Jersey have access to healthy foods."

"Under Governor Murphy's leadership, in partnership with Speaker Craig J. Coughlin and the Legislature, New Jersey has developed a powerful toolkit to combat food insecurity and tackle the entrenched economic inequality that is at its core," said **NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan**. "Our state's incredible network of food banks do so much more than just nourish their neighbors. They provide dignity, community and on-ramps to economic mobility as we work together to build a stronger and fairer economy. Through Governor Murphy's Sustain and Serve NJ program, the NJEDA has granted more than \$50 million to dozens of nonprofits, including food banks, food pantries and anti-hunger organizations."

"No one should have the first and biggest challenge on any given day be how to feed themselves and their family. As we continue to make headway tackling hunger in our communities with a forward-thinking, innovative approach, the reality we face is a pandemic that has left an astounding number of people food insecure," said **New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. "Bridging the gap between the front lines of hunger and critical food assistance programs must take center stage as we work to empower longer term stability for those in need. That's why I'm proud New Jersey has fiercely fought at the state-level to do things like provide historic aid to food banks and pantries, expand access to a free school breakfast and lunch, create the nation's first cabinet-level food security advocate, increase the minimum SNAP benefit for our seniors, and enact a state Child Tax Credit. Facing a looming hunger cliff as more and more federal food aid expansions end, we can't let up on this fight."

"New Jersey is a state that is leading the nation in food security work because we have a leader that has set the tone and the standard for our work," said **Mark Dinglasan, Director of the Office of the Food Security Advocate**. "We have programs and policies spearheaded by dedicated leaders that believe in creating equitable access to nutritious food through community empowerment, multi-sector partnerships, and increased access to vital supports and services. Governor Murphy and his Administration have created a tremendous opportunity for all of us, and this holiday season, it's up to all of us to work with and listen to each other and the communities we serve in order to advance this vital food security work."

"Hunger is a quiet crisis that was made worse by the pandemic and the economy," said **Senate President Nick Scutari**. "Financial challenges have made it hard for a growing number of families to put food on their tables. Foodbanks provide a lifeline for those who experience the insecurity of not knowing where their next meal is coming from."

"From our comprehensive policy approach to investments into food banks and creation of the first-in-the-nation Office of the Food Security Advocate, New Jersey's approach to food insecurity has made our state a leader in addressing the hunger crisis," said **Senator Joe Cryan, Assemblywoman Annette Quijano and Assemblyman Reginald Atkins**. "We are proud of what we have accomplished to bolster support for those on the front line in the fight against hunger and improve access to critical programs like SNAP and school meals, which help to meet the needs of our residents. Together, these initiatives bring us closer to eliminating food insecurity across the state."

"The key to closing gaps in our social systems is taking decisive action to address the challenges facing the people we serve, especially as it pertains to quality of life. Food insecurity is one such challenge we must address," said **Hillside Mayor Dahlia Vertreese**. "The Murphy Administration and our legislators are setting an example by taking action to mitigate these gaps in an effort to end food insecurity in our state. Families cannot thrive without the basic necessities of life. I can tell you as a Mayor that when you help people obtain those basic necessities, you truly touch their lives in a meaningful way. I applaud the Governor and Legislature for sending the message that every single citizen deserves access to the quality nutrition they need."

"A comprehensive approach is critical to making food security a reality. On behalf of New Jersey's food banks and our local networks, I'm proud of the innovative work the State has done for all residents," said **Carlos Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey**. "Governor Murphy, Speaker Coughlin, and Senate President Scutari are visionary leaders in the fight against hunger, and our partnership with them is more important now than ever before as families navigate a recovery fraught with challenges from the continuing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic."

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