



## NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

**Testimony of Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman  
Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee  
April 20, 2023**

Good Morning Chair Sarlo and Honorable Members of the Committee.

I am Sarah Adelman, Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, and I'm joined this morning by Deputy Commissioners Lisa Asare, Kaylee McGuire, and Elisa Neira, and acting Chief Financial Officer Eric Kaufmann. I am also joined in the room and online by my incredible leadership team members including our Assistant Commissioners and Division Directors. For all of the initiatives I will discuss today, I want to share gratitude and credit with these leaders and the nearly 7,500 staff who make up NJ Human Services. I also thank our many partners in local government and the community and provider organizations we partner with across the Garden State.

Thank you to this Committee for the opportunity to discuss Governor Murphy's proposed Fiscal Year 2024 budget for Human Services.

The budget includes continued and expanded opportunities for individuals we serve, including...

...families and children...

...individuals with disabilities...

...older adults...

...those with substance use and mental health conditions...

... New Americans, and...

...individuals in need of health care, social services, and other assistance.

### ***Home and Community Based Services***

First, I'm thrilled to share that Human Services will be making \$100 million in new investments in home and community-based services, including major investments in workforce development – an issue of great importance to the Department and our stakeholders and partners.

These historic investments include:

- Nearly \$20 million for loan redemption and similar programs for community-based care workers in fields such as behavioral health care, private duty nursing, applied behavior analysis, and substance use disorder treatment.
- Up to \$60 million for the workforce that serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, and substance use disorder to support recruiting, training, and retaining a culturally competent community-based workforce that meets the needs of today and stabilizes these fields for the future.
- It will also include funding for three certification & training programs:
  - Certified Recovery Support Practitioners, who are peers with lived experience with substance use and mental health concerns working in community-based behavioral health;

- Dual Diagnosis Certification pilot program for staff working in the community to support individuals with both intellectual and developmental disabilities and mental health challenges; and
- Training certified community health workers in apprenticeships.
- It also includes funding for universities, community colleges, and other partners to hire multi-lingual instructors and to translate training programs and curriculums into languages that correspond with New Jersey's immigrant communities. This will help bring new workers into our economy who are seeking home and community-based care sector jobs, such as certified home health aides.
- More than \$13 million to develop housing options for individuals residing in nursing facilities and institutional settings who could be supported in less restrictive community settings. This initiative will be primarily focused on individuals under the age of 65 with mental illness and/or intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Through these significant investments and innovative approaches, we're strengthening and prioritizing independence, community options, and person-centered care.

### ***Housing***

Human Services also provides housing subsidies to individuals with developmental disabilities, mental illness, and/or substance use disorder, and provides emergency assistance for individuals facing or at risk of homelessness.

The budget includes \$12 million to increase these rates to reflect fair market rent increases and to help ensure continued access to housing for individuals.

### ***Care Sector Wages***

And the Governor's budget builds on years of investments for our care sector workforce by adding nearly \$172 million in new State and federal funding to again increase wages for child care workers, certified nurse aides, direct support professionals, behavioral health and substance use providers, and other essential care economy workers.

### ***Child Care***

A thriving child care system means more jobs, inclusive economic growth, stronger futures for our children, and vital support for working families.

Through American Rescue Plan dollars, in this current fiscal year the Department has provided \$500 million in additional funds to support the child care industry through stabilization grants, bonus payments for child care workers, and higher provider payments.

We're excited that the FY24 budget plan invests \$112 million in new State funding to make child care more affordable for families and to support our vital child care providers.

This investment allows us to continue to waive copayments for families and to pay providers based on enrollment, rather than attendance.

During the pandemic, child care providers received an additional monthly supplemental payment of \$300 per child to ensure they're able to continue to

operate and serve families. The budget makes the \$300 monthly supplemental payment a permanent part of the child care assistance rate.

Importantly, the budget also includes \$12.8 million to help child care providers keep pace with the increasing minimum wage.

The plan also includes an additional \$400,000 for training and technical assistance for school districts who enroll in the Grow NJ Kids program, which supports quality child care and early learning.

### ***General Assistance***

The budget includes \$4.5 million to eliminate the 28-day waiting period for individuals eligible for the General Assistance program. This program provides cash assistance, emergency housing assistance benefits, and burial assistance.

Under the budget, individuals who are determined eligible would receive their cash assistance immediately instead of having to wait.

### ***Nutrition Assistance***

On food security, the budget continues the state investments of over \$30 million to ensure all SNAP households in New Jersey receive at least \$95 in monthly SNAP benefits. Thank you for your support in making the minimum payment the law and making New Jersey a national leader on this issue.

The budget also provides \$1 million dollars in combined state and federal funding to further expand the SNAP navigator program.

This will be used to hire staff who can provide training and support to community organizations interested in becoming SNAP navigators and will support outreach efforts.

### ***Deaf and Hard of Hearing***

The Department is also dedicated to increasing supports and access to services for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing .

So the budget includes \$200,000 to increase funding for our Hearing Aid Assistance for the Aged and Disabled program.

With hearing aids now more accessible over-the-counter, this will help ensure more residents have access to this critical assistance that enhances communication and a healthier life.

### ***Blind and Visually Impaired***

Additionally, requests for Braille books for students who are blind or visually impaired continue to increase, so the budget includes \$375,000 to fund Braille book translations.

The budget also includes funding to strengthen our recruitment efforts for Teachers of the Visually Impaired.

### ***Older Americans***

As we anticipate continued growth in the size of our aging population, it's critical that we expand services and supports for older adults and caregivers, which we are doing in several ways:

The budget will add funding to increase the Medicaid reimbursement rate for private duty nursing services to \$62 per hour when the services are provided by a registered nurse and \$50 per hour when the services are provided by a licensed practical nurse, to help agencies stay competitive and maintain this workforce.

And it includes \$30 million in State and federal funding to raise wages for certified nurse aides, who provide the majority of the direct care in most nursing facilities.

The budget also continues its \$50 million investment in the Quality Incentive Payment Program designed to drive and support quality improvements in nursing facilities.

The budget also provides an additional \$7 million to enhance funding for the Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving and the Statewide Respite Care Program to increase the rates paid to case managers and expand the number of weekly home health hours available to enrolled individuals.

And following the recommendations of our Caregiver Task Force, the budget includes funding to create a new Caregiver Hub – a website that will help unpaid caregivers better navigate resources.

Making New Jersey a more affordable place to call home means working to address the cost of prescription drug medicine. The budget provides more than \$1.3 million to increase income limits by another \$10,000 under the PAAD and Senior Gold prescription assistance programs that help eligible seniors and individuals with disabilities save money on premiums and copayments for drugs. This builds on a \$10,000 income limit increase that took effect in January 2022.

And to reinforce our continued commitment to advancing age-friendly practices, this budget also includes funding for community grants to support efforts to make New Jersey an Age-Friendly State.

### ***Mental Health and Addiction***

Mental health and addiction services continue to be a critical priority.

The budget continues state funding for the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the development of mobile outreach teams. This will help expand access to lifesaving mental health services so that individuals in distress have someone to call, someone to come and somewhere to go.

To support community providers of behavioral health services and their direct care staff, the budget will maintain the \$38 million wage increase in the current fiscal year, and will build on it by adding an additional \$38 million in state and federal funding.

The Governor's budget continues to fund our psychiatric residency program and includes additional funding this year to support Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellows. Fully funding the costs for these fellows will ensure slot availability and ultimately, enhanced capacity to serve youth with mental illness.

The budget proposes a statewide expansion of the ARRIVE Together program, a partnership between the Attorney General, State Police, and Human Services where police respond to a mental health or substance use related call with a plainclothes officer in an unmarked car accompanied by a mental health professional.

And the budget continues to support our partnership with Justice Rabner, Judge Grant and the New Jersey Courts as we work together to address the mental health needs of justice involved individuals. Together, we have established four mental health pilot programs linking together the courts, prosecutors, public defenders, community-based services, and behavioral health providers. The program quickly identifies defendants released pre-trial who have mental health conditions and assists them in gaining access to community-based services, mental health evaluations and treatment, and opportunities for admission into a diversion



program. In FY24, we anticipate expanding this pilot program to additional counties.

### ***Medicaid***

In NJ FamilyCare, our state Medicaid program, a significant focus of our work in the months ahead is the redetermination and renewal of coverage for all 2.2 million New Jersey residents enrolled in our program.

As that important work is underway, we continue to focus on enhancing and expanding services. To that end, we recently received approval of our 1115 waiver from the federal government, which grants us authority to maintain existing innovations and enhance our ability to serve individuals and communities with the best possible care. This plan is built around a simple yet vital premise – a healthier New Jersey must include everyone, and must do so with high-quality, integrated and evidence-based care.

The plan includes new programs such as:

- A multifaceted, integrated housing strategy for Medicaid beneficiaries that incorporates coverage for additional targeted services, and coordination across state and community resources involved in the provision of health and housing services.
- A Community Health Worker Pilot that will focus on overcoming health disparities within local communities by providing care coordination services and directly providing preventive or related services;
- 12 months of continuous eligibility for adults whose Medicaid eligibility is based on Modified Adjusted Gross Income;

- New incentives for Medicaid behavioral health providers to implement new Health Information Technology functionality, to support integrated and high quality care;
- A new Autism Adjunct Services Pilot to support and provide children living with autism rehabilitative and therapeutic services; and
- Increased coverage of nutrition services, including a medically indicated meal pilot for individuals at risk of gestational diabetes.

This plan further enables New Jersey's efforts to support the mental health, housing, maternal health, and other needs of the families and communities served through NJ FamilyCare. And it is our hope these innovative projects will also serve as a model for other states in providing comprehensive services. The budget includes more than \$50 million in State and federal funding for this important work. The budget also includes nearly \$14 million in new funding to continue our ongoing and vital investments in children's health through our Cover All Kids program.

As of January 1, children under the age of 19 whose families meet income eligibility requirements are now able to obtain Medicaid coverage regardless of immigration status. Since the beginning of Cover All Kids in July 2021, we've enrolled nearly 65,000 more children into NJ FamilyCare, including more than 10,000 kids since January when we removed immigration status as an eligibility requirement.

### ***Office of New Americans***

Welcoming new Americans continues to be a priority. The budget continues building our Office of New Americans and includes an investment of more than \$10 million for legal services for vulnerable immigrants – including legal services for unaccompanied minors.

### ***Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities***

We're always thankful for the work of Direct Support Professionals who help those with intellectual and developmental disabilities thrive in our communities.

With your help, the Department has increased DSP wages five times since the 2019 fiscal year for a cumulative \$4.75 per hour wage increase. And the FY24 budget includes an additional \$83 million in State and federal funds to increase DSP wages by an additional \$1.25 per hour.

Support brokers provide skills training and support to individuals and families that self-direct their services. To reflect these important responsibilities, and in line with our goal to improve the experience of individuals who self-direct, the budget also includes funding for a support brokerage rate increase.

Additionally, the budget includes \$72 million in State and federal funding for an increase for all fee-for-service provider rates to partially offset the impact of inflation.

Human Services has prioritized the unique needs of individuals with I/DD and complex behavioral challenges, especially through the funding of new residential behavioral stabilization homes for individuals with acute needs. To build on these efforts, the budget calls for \$3.2 million to implement the Systemic, Therapeutic, Assessment, Resources and Treatment (START) model here in New Jersey to establish regional response teams to address behavioral health crises in individuals with I/DD, train State and provider staff, and develop resources.

Additionally, to build out more capacity for adults with I/DD in need of emergency placements, the budget includes more than \$5 million to restructure emergency

capacity beds to better align with the level-of-care required by many individuals and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

***Disability Services***

Our Division of Disability Services, with Rutgers' Bloustein School for Planning and Public Policy, has been funding grants to organizations and local governments to promote inclusive practices that support the health and well-being of individuals with disabilities. The budget includes about \$400,000 to expand these efforts to additional grantees.

As you've heard, Governor Murphy's proposed budget for NJ Human Services advances major new investments, maintains and expands critical wage enhancements and protects the vital services families depend upon. This budget further signals that New Jersey is focused on affordability, responsibility, and opportunity.

Thank you and I welcome your questions.