

NJEA lauds Gov. Murphy's first budget

TRENTON, NJ – MARCH 14, 2018 – NJEA today lauded Gov. Murphy's first budget as a fiscally responsible plan that invests in our future and the working families who make our state strong. The spending plan laid out by Murphy takes a large step toward meeting the state's current obligations while preparing to keep its promises for the future.

"Gov. Murphy is keeping his promises to New Jersey residents," NJEA President Marie Blistan said. "That's the vision that New Jersey voters supported in November, and it's the budget he delivered today."

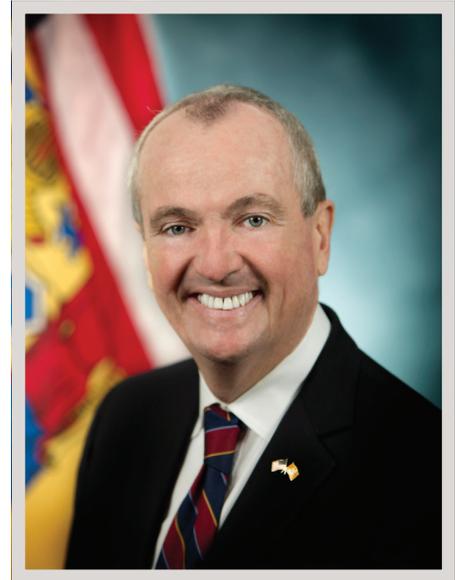
Gov. Murphy's budget begins a four year phase in to full funding of the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). It provides an additional \$283 million in K-12 school aid in this budget and ensures that no district gets less aid than last year, while providing 94 percent of districts with more aid than the current year's budget.

"For the first time since 2009, the state budget respects the school funding formula, which has been repeatedly upheld by the state Supreme Court and is a national model for fairness and educational equity," said Blistan. "It is critical that our investment in education builds on our successes and ensures that every child in New Jersey, regardless of zip code, has access to the resources necessary to learn and thrive. We also must invest in the people who work in our schools by reducing the onerous burden of skyrocketing health care costs. This budget enables districts to begin treating employees with respect and will help keep talented women and men in positions throughout our public schools."

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller highlighted the governor's expansion of pre-K and funding for higher education.

For decades, NJEA has advocated for increased access to high-quality preschool and full-day kindergarten. In this budget, Gov. Murphy allocates \$57 million more to expand Pre-K, the largest increase in a decade. As a result, more than 3,500 more children will be able to get a strong early learning foundation. In keeping with another of his campaign promises, Gov. Murphy's first budget includes significant increases for higher education, including \$50 million for tuition-free community college for families earning less than \$45,000 per year. In addition, it increases the Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) by \$7.5 million and Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) by \$1.5 million.

"New Jersey's system of public education is one of the best in the nation," Spiller said. "But early childhood and higher education funding has fallen short of what our students deserve. We need



Murphy: *"We will rebuild this state on the shoulders of our union brothers and sisters"*

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to do more to ensure that all children reach their potential and all high school graduates have the opportunity to continue their education in New Jersey. Gov. Murphy's budget takes a large step toward meeting both of those important goals.

Gov. Murphy's budget allocates \$3.2 billion for pension funding, a move that will help to restore the state's credit rating and restore confidence in the state's commitment to meeting its obligations and its ability to do so.

"This budget does much to repair the disastrous decisions made by previous administrations," said NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty. "By putting New Jersey back on a path to fully funding pension payments and restoring the millionaires tax, New Jersey's taxpayers will finally see a budget that reflects their values while meeting our obligations. Keeping the state's pension promise to educators and other public employees helps ensure that we can attract a strong, talented work force to keep our schools and our state strong."

In addition to funding for public education, Gov. Murphy also tackled other issues that matter to students and their families. Student safety, always a primary concern for educators and their families, was front and center in Gov. Murphy's address to the Legislature, where he promised common-sense gun safety regulations that will keep our schools and communities safer.

In addition, Gov. Murphy's proposed budget restores \$7.5 million in cuts to women's health care centers, including increased access to family planning. It also triples funding for NJ Transit, phases in increases toward a \$15 minimum wage, provides \$22 million for the Earned Income Tax Credit, and restores clean energy funding.

"Gov. Murphy's priorities are clear," said Blistan. "His budget reinforces the vision of New Jersey that he shared with all of us on the campaign trail. He is prioritizing the needs of working families and funding the initiatives we need to restore our economy. His budget will put more New Jerseyans back to work in well-paying jobs, and keep more of our graduates in New Jersey. It works to ensure the clean air, water, and energy we need to thrive and grow. And he does it all with a profound commitment to labor. Gov. Murphy promised to 'rebuild this state on the shoulders of our union brothers and sisters' and we pledge to working with him to restore New Jersey as a place for children and families to thrive."