Policy Victories:

- On January 13, Governor Murphy signed the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act, which preserves the legal right to obtain an abortion in New Jersey. In addition, the Department of Banking and Insurance was authorized to study whether the cost of an abortion is an impediment to low-income and uninsured people. The enacted law leaves out key provisions of the original bill, the Reproductive Freedom Act, such as requiring health insurers to cover abortions and birth control at no cost out of pocket. However, advocates still believe this is a step in the right direction and will continue to urge leaders to ensure that all New Jerseyans can access funding support for abortions. ACLU-NJ, New Jersey Policy Perspective, and partners of the Thrive NJ coalition strongly supported these efforts. Read more [here](#).

- On January 18, Governor Murphy adopted S3707/A5673 into law, which decriminalizes sexual activity while knowingly infected with HIV, ensuring confidentiality of both victims and accused in cases where an individual acts with specific intent to transmit HIV. Advocates affirm the law for reducing the stigma of HIV and its alignment with current science and public health practices. Hyacinth and partners successfully advocated for this new law. Read more [here](#).

- Governor Murphy signed several bills into law to expand harm reductions efforts to combat the state’s opioid crisis. The new laws will expand syringe service programs in the state (S3009/A4847), establish local drug overdose fatality review teams (S3493/A5458), and decriminalize the possession of syringes and permit certain expungement for the possession and distribution of hypodermic needles (A798/S52). Hyacinth and partners led harm reduction advocacy. Read more [here](#).

- Governor Murphy signed legislation (S2515/A4676) that gradually increases the recycled content of various packing products, including plastic containers, plastic beverage containers, paper bags, trash bags, and glass containers to 50% post-consumer recycled content. This law aims to improve New Jersey's low plastic recycling rate which is estimated to be at 9% and complements the Plastic Pollution Reduction Act of 2020, which bans single-use plastic and paper bags and polystyrene food containers, which goes into full effect this May. Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions and Environment NJ Research and Policy Center led the advocacy effort. Read more [here](#).
• Governor Murphy signed legislation that would limit police presence at polling places and ballot drop boxes. The law directs both uniformed and non-uniformed police officers to keep at least 100 feet from the polling station or drop boxes. New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and the League of Women Voters of New Jersey advocated for this policy change. Read more here.

• Due to advocacy by Make the Road NJ, two pieces of legislation were signed into law in early January that now requires school report cards to include information on school support staff, including mental health professionals and school security personnel (S2811/A4838). The second bill (A1184/S1020) requires school districts to report school discipline data by race. These two bills will create transparency and work to end the school-to-prison pipeline in New Jersey. Read more here.

• Governor Murphy signed legislation (S3683/A5380) that would make institutions of higher education provide student loan information by race, ethnicity, age, and other factors. This new law will allow for a greater understanding of the student debt crisis, particularly for minority students. The New Jersey Institute for Social Justice’s Freed from Debt report called for the collection of racial data regarding student loan debt. Read more here.

• On January 18, Governor Murphy adopted two juvenile justice reform measures. The new laws will provide free public defender services (S896/A677) and eliminate oppressive fines and fees (S3319/A5507). New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and partners advocated for these new laws. Read more here.

Policy Updates:

• On December 18, New Jersey Public Radio’s Karen Yi reported that most of New Jersey’s $40 million funds to help immigrants and other residents that were excluded from stimulus payments/covid related aid during the pandemic would be re-allocated to pay for other expenses in the NJ Dept. of Human Services. After strong opposition by community leaders and advocates, Governor Murphy announced that he would restore the fund, streamline the application, and extend the deadline to apply until the end of February. Read more here and here.

• New Jersey’s statewide minimum wage increased by $1 to $13 per hour, effective January 1, 2022. The increase is scheduled based on legislation signed by Governor Murphy in February 2019 that gradually raises the minimum wage to $15 per hour by 2024 for most workers. Read more here.

• The Murphy Administration announced the launch of the Emergency Rescue Mortgage Assistance Program (ERMA) to aid eligible homeowners negatively impacted by the
COVID-19 pandemic. This program will provide up to $35,000 in assistance to cover mortgage arrearages, delinquent property taxes, and other housing cost delinquencies for eligible homeowners negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ERMA application portal opens on Tuesday, February 8 at 9 AM. Read more here.

- The Housing Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ) applauded the announcement by the U.S. Treasury that New Jersey will be receiving an additional $42 million for the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program (CVERAP). The Network provides outreach and education about available resources for tenants, homeowners, and landlords through the Housing Help NJ program (www.housinghelpnj.org), with support from the NJ Pandemic Relief Fund and the Department of Community Affairs.

- The New Jersey Pinelands Commission swore in three new gubernatorial appointees to its 15-member board of directors earlier this month. Long-time Pinelands advocate Theresa Lettman was finally approved by the Senate, which began with her nomination by Governor Murphy in early 2019. Lettman monitored activities in the Pinelands while working for the Pinelands Preservation Alliance for 26 years before she retired in 2016. Read more here.

- Governor Murphy signed a law to ensure that the contributions, history, and heritage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) are included in the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Social Studies for Kindergarten through Grade 12 students. Read more here.

**Policy Setbacks:**

- Despite strong opposition by many Fund grantees and partners, new legislation was signed into law on January 18 by Governor Murphy to allow police officers to view body-worn camera footage before writing police reports. This new law (S3939/A5864) negatively impacts police accountability and creates less transparency. Read more here.

**Policy Reports:**

- New Jersey Policy Perspective released the report, *Recovery for All: Excluded New Jerseyans Fund Falls Short*. This report finds that even before the Excluded New Jersey Fund was cut, the $50 million program was only enough to cover 25,000 individuals or 12,500 households. A fraction of those excluded from federal pandemic relief, including the state's nearly half a million undocumented residents, roughly 300,000 of whom are in the labor force. Read more here.
Leadership and Organizational Announcements

• Education Law Center welcomes Rachael Deane as Inaugural Director of Legal and State Policy Support. Read more here.

• Eastern Environmental Law Center is excited to announce that Maggie Broughton has joined their team as a new staff attorney to focus primarily on Environmental Justice. Read more here.

• Latino Action Network Foundation welcomes Francesca Baroni as Coordinator for Health Justice Initiatives.

Events

• Feb. 11-March 18 - Center for American Women and Politics, Ready to Run Virtual Series

Job Announcements

• Director of Development, New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
• President/Co-Presidents, New Jersey Policy Perspective
• People, Benefits, and Culture Manager, ACLU-NJ
• Communications Manager, Make the Road NJ
• Director for Empowerment Programs, Health Care Organizer, NJ Citizen Action
• Policy and Advocacy Director, Work Environment Council of New Jersey
• New Jersey Reporter, WNYC/Gothamist
• Part-time Executive Assistant & Membership Manager, Association of New Jersey Environmental Commission
• Various Positions, New Jersey Future
• Various Positions, Hyacinth
• Various Positions, New Jersey League of Conservation Voters

Please send policy news and updates, job announcements, and staff updates to Erik Cruz Morales at ecruz-morales@fundfornj.org or you can Tweet to @FundforNJ.