

February 26th, 2025

## Our Response to the Governor's Budget Address

Following Governor Phil Murphy's presentation of the Fiscal Year 2026 State Budget yesterday, NJ Coalition to End Homelessness CEO, Connie Mercer, issued the following statement:

Governor Murphy has been a trusted partner, and we are grateful for his support through the budget of the following:

- zoning reform for laws that will encourage the construction of new affordable housing
- support of homeless veterans
- a plan to support a Statewide Continuum of Care homelessness initiative.

However, greater actions must be taken to address the immediate needs of those who are currently in housing crisis in our state.

According to the Point-in-Time Counts of the Homeless, there has been a 45% increase in homelessness in New Jersey over the past two years, with a 24% jump last year. An increase of this magnitude constitutes a statewide emergency, and to begin to address it, the following needs to be done:

**1. We must invest an additional \$10 million into our shelters and emergency homeless services**, which are struggling to meet this rising need, while facing uncertainty around federal funding that many homeless service providers rely on.

These emergency services are the first responders for thousands of individuals in crisis and provide a vital safety net keeping thousands off the streets. Many shelters in our state have reached capacity and are financially in the red, forcing them to set up waiting lists and turn people away who are in desperate need, and for whom this is a last resort.

**2. The Governor must NOT divert funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) away from low-income and extremely low-income residents** to subsidize programs for residents over the income threshold in the AHTF's guidelines. We must keep this fund dedicated for building affordable homes for those who are currently experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. NJ's affordable housing shortage is at an all-time high. This is not the time to raid this fund, which will result in severe harm for our most vulnerable neighbors in communities across the state.

The Coalition will continue to advocate to ensure that these crucial investments needed to protect residents in their greatest time of need be included in the final version of the budget passed in June.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION**



## **We Need Your Advocacy: Keep NJ Shelters Afloat to Provide Life-Saving Services!**

We set up meetings in March with key state legislators to advocate for life-saving investments in addressing homelessness, specifically \$10 million in the upcoming state budget toward our underfunded shelter system.

**Please contact Raisa, our Policy Associate, at [rrubinstankiewicz@njceh.org](mailto:rrubinstankiewicz@njceh.org) or (609) 865-2534 to join these legislative meetings.**

**Legislators need to hear from you directly about the need your residents and your organization face!** We will provide training beforehand in how to lobby and meet with legislators.

This funding could not be more critical, given rising homelessness and the threat of losing federal funding. New Jersey is also facing a particularly tight budget season this year, so our power comes from being unified in advocating together to meet this need.

**COALITION NEWS**



## **Morristown withdraws ordinance to criminalize homelessness after community backlash**

We are grateful that the Morristown City Council, at the request of the Mayor, withdrew a proposed ordinance to ban camping on public property, after receiving substantial community backlash.

This comes a few weeks after a similar ordinance was defeated in Paterson and is part of a trend of local communities' forceful opposition to any efforts to criminalize homelessness.

We invite municipalities to instead work with us, shelters, community groups, and residents with lived experiences of homelessness to pursue meaningful, compassionate solutions to homelessness.

**Criminalizing homelessness is cruel, expensive, and does not reduce homelessness; in fact, it only makes it worse.** Research demonstrates that it can cost up to 3 times more to enforce anti-homeless laws than find housing for those who need it.

Congratulations to the Morristown community on this organizing victory! We were honored to work with you.

## **RESOURCES FOR HOMELESS SERVICES PROVIDERS**



**Lobbying 101: How to Meet with NJ State Legislators**

The Coalition will be offering two trainings next week on how to lobby and meet with state legislators, to help you feel prepared to join us in meetings with your state legislators. Please sign up for whichever time below works best for you.

**Wednesday, 3/5 at 7pm:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/pbcB3AUCSPWH9MFbTTVVqw>

**Thursday, 3/6 at 12pm:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Nadx2XULRJaRHVYLSVWuUQ>

If you have any questions please contact Raisa, our Policy Associate, at [rrubinstankiewicz@njceh.org](mailto:rrubinstankiewicz@njceh.org) or call [\(609\) 865-2534](tel:6098652534)

---

## **NJ Department of Children & Families' Webinar on State and Federal Funding Landscape**

DCF will be hosting a webinar this **Friday, 2/28 from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.**, with presentations from Commissioner Christine Beyer and Katie Mapa, Director of Policy for the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA).

Commissioner Beyer will discuss updates related to Governor Murphy's FY 2025 Budget Message, and Director Mapa will provide a briefing on the President's first 100 Days and the federal landscape for social services.

**Register HERE** to receive a Zoom link and to submit questions, which will be sorted and responded to during the call, as time allows.



## **ICE Raid Guidance for Homeless Service Providers**

The National Homeless Law Center and Crowell & Moring LLP have put together ICE Raid Guidance for Homeless Service Providers: "What to do Before, During, and After a Raid": <https://homelesslaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ICE-Guidance.pdf>.

While you may have been inundated with materials on this topic, we recommend you spend a moment reviewing this guidance as it includes some unique proposals about steps to take following an ICE raid specifically designed for homeless service providers.

Installing signage in your facility indicating private areas forces ICE agents to obtain a valid warrant, signed by a judge in order to enter those non-public areas of the facility (further explanation on page two of the guidance document linked above). For a sample sign, please contact our Policy Associate, Raisa at:

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

HomeFront  
NOW HIRING:

**Director of Shelter Services – Family Preservation Center** [Read More](#)  
[Apply Here](#)



## NEW JERSEY HOMELESSNESS IN THE NEWS

### [Murphy Pushes Reform of Zoning and Permitting to Boost Affordable Housing](#)

*NJ Spotlight News*

Governor Phil Murphy is calling on lawmakers to ease outdated zoning restrictions and expand affordable housing opportunities across New Jersey. In his State of the State address, he will urge the Legislature to pass bills that would allow accessory dwelling units, convert vacant commercial properties into housing, and reduce parking requirements near transit. These reforms, championed by Senator Troy Singleton, aim to cut red tape and increase housing supply, though they are likely to face pushback from municipalities resisting state interference in local zoning laws.



### [Morristown Mayor Gets Council to Withdrawl His Ordinance to Prosecute the Homeless for Sleeping On Town Property](#)

*Morristown Green.com*

After public backlash, Morristown Mayor Tim Dougherty announced that a proposed ordinance criminalizing homelessness would be withdrawn. The measure, which would have fined and jailed individuals for sleeping on public

property, was introduced with little discussion but quickly met with strong opposition from advocates and residents. Groups like the NJ Coalition to End Homelessness and local advocates were prepared to rally against it, just as they did when a similar ordinance was scrapped in Paterson. Dougherty now says he wants to take more time to work with the community on real solutions.



---

## Mayor Ras Baraka Unveils New Shelters and Services to Combat Homelessness

*Pix11*

Hope Village, a community made from shipping containers, has provided transitional housing for individuals like Walter Singleton, who spent over two decades homeless before moving in. A second Hope Village opened in early 2024 to house more people in need, aligning with Newark Mayor Ras Baraka's three-year plan, *The Path Home*, aimed at reducing homelessness. The city reports a 57% decrease in its unsheltered population, emphasizing efforts to provide stable housing and support services for those struggling with addiction and mental health challenges.

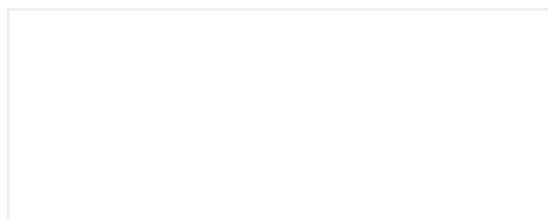
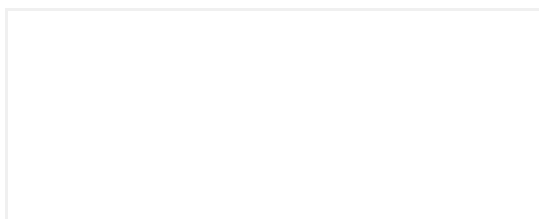


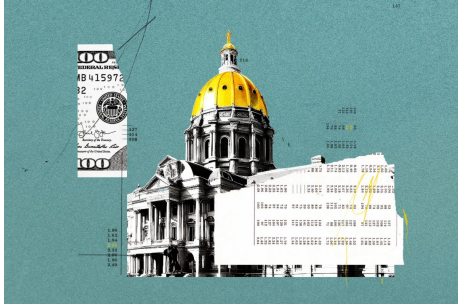
---

## NJ Fights Landlord Discrimination: 15 Findings, 5 Decrees - \$105K Relief

*Newsbreak*

New Jersey Attorney General Matthew Platkin and the Division on Civil Rights (DCR) have taken enforcement action against landlords, property managers, and real estate agents accused of illegally refusing to rent to tenants with government rental assistance. Under the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), landlords cannot reject applicants based on their source of income, including Section 8 vouchers, yet investigations found multiple cases of violations. The enforcement efforts include 15 Findings of Probable Cause and five consent decrees, resulting in over \$105,000 in penalties and commitments to policy changes, staff training, and ongoing monitoring to ensure fair housing access across the state.





## [NJ Continues to Face Massive Deficits, Fiscal Experts Warn](#)

*New Jersey Monitor*

As Governor Phil Murphy prepares his final budget address, a new report from Rowan University's Sweeney Center warns that New Jersey's growing deficits could drain its surplus within a few years. Without major changes in spending or revenue, the state is projected to outspend its reserves by billions, putting programs like Stay NJ at risk. Experts highlight economic uncertainties, including potential federal policy shifts and a possible recession, as additional challenges that could further strain the state's finances.



## [With Federal Funding At Risk, Calls Grow For State to Prep for Bumpy Times](#)

*New Jersey Monitor*

With federal funding uncertain under the Trump administration's proposed cuts, New Jersey faces potential budget shortfalls that could impact everything from Medicaid to infrastructure and social services. Advocates and analysts warn that the state must prepare for "bumpy times" by bolstering its surplus, which currently stands at \$6 billion but could be quickly depleted. While Governor Murphy is set to unveil his budget proposal later this month, concerns remain about how the state will navigate federal funding instability without cutting essential programs.



## [Camden County Democrats Need to Stand for New Jersey Values](#)

*Daily Journal*

New Jersey's county social service workers play a crucial role in helping families access housing, healthcare, food assistance, and emergency aid. The article notes that despite the critical role these front-line workers play, Camden County's elected officials are pursuing an aggressive anti-union policy that threatens the South Jersey social safety network. Some are paid so little they qualify for the very programs they help others

navigate, forcing them to work multiple jobs just to get by. Their needs are urgent, not just for them but for the families they serve.

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

### [The Death of Two Homeless Children in Frigid Detroit Raises Questions Without Flawed System In Peril](#)

*CNN*

The tragic deaths of two homeless children in Detroit have highlighted systemic failures in the city's response to homelessness, as their mother, Tateona Williams, struggled for months to secure shelter despite numerous calls for help. After being placed on the Coordinated Entry system, Williams and her children were left without assistance, and the city's shelter resources were not accessible when they needed them most. Advocates are calling for a re-evaluation of how cities connect families with shelter, especially amid growing concerns over potential federal cuts to vital homelessness services.



### [Rising Homelessness Highlights Need to Invest In Proven Solutions, Reject Policies That Worsen Homelessness and Housing Instability](#)

*Center Budget and Policy Priorities*

Homelessness has surged by 18% since 2023, hitting record levels for the second year in a row, yet proposed federal cuts threaten to make the crisis even worse. Slashing housing vouchers, raising rents for low-income tenants, and stripping essential protections would force even more people into homelessness at a time when shelters and resources are already overwhelmed. Policymakers must act now to reject these dangerous cuts and expand rental assistance—without urgent action, thousands more families will be pushed onto the streets with nowhere to turn.

### [We Need Better Data to Combat Homelessness](#)

*Governing*

Accurately measuring homelessness is crucial to ensuring communities receive the resources needed to address it, yet traditional counting methods often underestimate the true scale of the crisis. More effective approaches that track individuals in real time provide a clearer picture of housing needs and help connect





people to support faster. Cities using these data-driven strategies have seen meaningful progress, proving that better measurement leads to more effective solutions.

**Focus on the criminalization of homelessness:**

**[Trump's Plan to Eliminate Homelessness Is Just Cruel. Here's Another Option](#)**

*Mother Jones*

The U.S. Supreme Court's 2024 *Grants Pass* ruling has made it easier for cities to criminalize homelessness, allowing fines and jail time for people sleeping outdoors, even when no shelter is available. This aligns with Donald Trump's campaign pledge to use "every tool" to remove homeless people from public view, a plan that prioritizes punishment over real solutions. While some cities are embracing these harsh measures, others are focusing on effective policies—expanding affordable housing, providing rent assistance, and removing zoning barriers—that address the root causes of homelessness rather than making it a crime.



**[Poverty Is Not a Crime: Outrage After California City Passes Law Targeting Homeless Encampments](#)**

*The Guardian*

Fremont, California, has passed one of the strictest anti-homelessness ordinances in the state, banning camping on public property and making it illegal to "aid and abet" encampments, sparking outrage from advocates and community groups. Critics argue the law effectively criminalizes homelessness and those who support unhoused people, forcing individuals to leave encampments without offering real solutions. Despite widespread opposition and calls to protect aid workers, the city council moved forward with the measure, prompting protests and chants of "Poverty is not a crime" from frustrated residents.



**[RI's First Pallet Shelter Village Finally Opens. Here's What to Know About It.](#)**



**[Yes, Tiny Houses For the Homeless Actually Work - and a New Study Shows](#)**

ECHO Village, Rhode Island’s first tiny-home shelter village, is finally opening in Providence after five years of planning and permitting delays. The project, run by House of Hope, will provide 45 shelters and essential services for people experiencing homelessness, addressing a crisis that has worsened since 2020, with the number of unsheltered individuals doubling. While leaders hope this pilot program will be replicated statewide, the lengthy approval process highlights the challenges of building emergency housing in Rhode Island, prompting calls for policy changes to streamline future projects.

Group Shelters

*Good Good Good*

A new study from Portland State University confirms that tiny homes are more effective than traditional shelters at helping people transition out of homelessness. The research found that 36% of tiny home residents moved into permanent housing, compared to just 12% of those in mass shelters, likely due to the stability and support these communities provide. Programs like Urban Alchemy’s tiny home villages offer not just shelter, but personalized care, safety, and a sense of dignity—giving residents like Alisha Wilks the chance to heal, rebuild, and move toward permanent housing.

The Outsider: Why Some People Experiencing Homelessness Choose to Sleep Outside Over Shelter

*The Owensboro Times*



Many people experiencing homelessness choose to sleep outside rather than in shelters due to past trauma, mental health struggles, and the loss of autonomy that shelter environments can bring. While encampments provide a sense of community, they also pose significant safety risks, including exposure to violence, harsh weather, and limited access to healthcare. Instead of forcing individuals into shelters, outreach programs and trauma-informed approaches can help bridge the gap by providing resources, harm reduction strategies, and trust-building efforts that respect their choices while ensuring they receive the support they need.

San Jose Has An Idea to Bring Street Homelessness to 'Functional Zero.'  
Can It Work?

*KQED*

San José is aiming to bring street homelessness to *functional zero* by expanding temporary shelter options, but some advocates worry this focus lacks long-term solutions. The plan calls for \$255 million in one-time spending to build or buy shelter capacity and \$234 million annually to operate these spaces, with the goal of having more people exit homelessness than enter it each month. While Mayor Matt Mahan argues that prioritizing immediate shelter is necessary, critics emphasize the need for a balanced approach that includes permanent affordable housing to prevent people from cycling back into homelessness.



---

## Could a Mental Health Program Help Break Local Cycles of Homelessness?

*The Keene Sentinel*

Cael's Corner, a new mental health program at the Hundred Nights shelter in Keene, aims to break the cycle of homelessness by providing free, accessible therapy before crises escalate. Launched in partnership with Maps Counseling Services, the program takes a low-barrier



approach, recognizing that traditional clinical models can be overwhelming for those who have faced trauma and distrust the healthcare system. By offering mental health support in a familiar setting, it helps individuals process their experiences and stabilize before they end up hospitalized or incarcerated. While the program is already making an impact, sustaining and expanding such efforts remains a challenge due to workforce shortages and funding gaps, highlighting the need for greater investment in mental health services to truly disrupt cycles of homelessness.

**We love to share news about the accomplishments, events job opportunities and noteworthy activities of NJ's homelessness service agencies. If you have something to share, please send it to us at [info@NJCEH.org](mailto:info@NJCEH.org)**



NJ Coalition to End Homelessness | 10 Mercer Street | Princeton, NJ 08540 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!