

VIA EMAIL

April 13, 2020

Hon. Philip D. Murphy  
Governor  
225 W. State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney  
125 W State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin  
125 W State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Murphy, Senate President Sweeney, and Assembly Speaker Coughlin,

Thank you for your leadership and for your tireless efforts to support New Jersey residents to stay safe. As you well know, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a public health, economic, and humanitarian crisis in New Jersey. We are writing today to highlight our deep concern for community members who are suffering in this crisis and unable to access the majority of critical support and relief programs administered by the state and federal government. Low-wage and immigrant workers are among the most vulnerable in our communities, particularly immigrants without an authorized federal immigration status, and their US citizen family members.

New Jersey is home to nearly half a million undocumented immigrants.<sup>1</sup> About 128,000 U.S. citizen children in New Jersey have an undocumented parent. Undocumented immigrants from New Jersey contribute approximately \$604 million in state and local taxes in New Jersey and \$1.1 billion in federal taxes, and tens of thousands of New Jersey immigrants file taxes with an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). Undocumented immigrants' purchasing power is approximately \$10.5 billion in New Jersey, according to the New American Economy Project. Despite significant contributions, immigrants are currently left out of federal and state relief programs even as many are working on the front lines of the crisis.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/03/Pew-Research-Center\\_2018-11-27\\_U-S-Unauthorize-d-Immigrants-Total-Dips\\_Updated-2019-06-25.pdf](https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/03/Pew-Research-Center_2018-11-27_U-S-Unauthorize-d-Immigrants-Total-Dips_Updated-2019-06-25.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tapinto.net/articles/frontline-covid-workers-daca-recipients-legislators-release-platform-on-daca-in-nj>

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/undocumented-immigrant-population/state/NJ>

[https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigration-and-covid-19/#nae\\_research](https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/immigration-and-covid-19/#nae_research)

<https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/undocumented-immigrants-covid-19-crisis/>

Immigrants are disproportionately likely to work in the sectors that have been hardest hit by COVID-19-related closures, like restaurants and retail, *and* in sectors that continue to operate to support New Jersey, like warehouses, health care, and food delivery. Yet immigrants without work authorization or a recognized federal immigration status - including those with US citizen families - are largely excluded from the programs that are supposed to help workers when they lose their jobs or have their work hours cut. This includes the federal stimulus payments authorized under the CARES Act, state unemployment benefits, federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA), and other programs under the CARES Act.

In order to address our current economic crisis and effectively spur demand in our local communities, it is critical that New Jersey provide safety net support to all individuals, regardless of federal immigration status. Thousands of immigrants across NJ have lost their jobs and have no income to rely on or income support. Still, tens of thousands more continue to work on the frontlines facing greater risks of exposure to COVID-19 without access to health care or income support, while doing the very work that allows many New Jerseyans to stay safe at home and allow aid, supplies, and services to keep New Jersey's economic and social engines operable.

We therefore urge you to take immediate action to provide access to benefits and disaster relief, and to create publicly funded support for immigrants and their families to replace lost income for those who have suffered hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic in New Jersey. We are aware of the economic strain facing the state at the moment, and also recognize that this is an issue of equity and survival not only for the nearly half million individuals who are unable to access aid, but also their families and communities who count on their well-being. No one can be safe in New Jersey and we cannot "flatten the curve" if some residents cannot access life sustaining supports. As go our most marginalized community members, so goes New Jersey.

Across the country, localities have taken urgent action to create funds, programs, and supports for undocumented community members.<sup>3</sup> New Jersey - ranked third in the nation for immigrant share of population<sup>4</sup> - must act now to create a dedicated fund for income replacement and disaster assistance for workers and families in need regardless of status. We are ready to assist in the development of an initiative to support immigrant New Jerseyans.

We also urge you to speak out to the federal government and our Congressional delegation to urge inclusion of immigrants in the next federal stimulus package and to ensure unrestricted federal funds that the state can use to help all residents.

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<sup>3</sup>See, e.g. Boston Resiliency Fund." Boston.gov, 16 Mar. 2020, [www.boston.gov/departments/treasury/boston-resiliency-fund](http://www.boston.gov/departments/treasury/boston-resiliency-fund).

Nesterak, Max. "Minneapolis Creates \$5 Million COVID-19 Relief Fund Available to Undocumented Residents." Minnesota Reformer, 2020, <https://minnesotareformer.com/briefs/minneapolis-creates-5-million-covid-19-relief-fund-available-to-undocumented-residents/>. "Garcetti Announces Relief For Businesses, Calls For Action To Help Immigrants Amid Coronavirus Pandemic." CBS Los Angeles, 2020, [losangeles.cbslocal.com/2020/04/08/coronavirus-garcetti-relief-businesses-immigrants/](https://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2020/04/08/coronavirus-garcetti-relief-businesses-immigrants/).

<https://minnesotareformer.com/briefs/minneapolis-creates-5-million-covid-19-relief-fund-available-to-undocumented-residents/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/demographics/US>

We thank you for your long-term commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of all residents of New Jersey, regardless of immigration status. Our coalition of immigrant justice, labor, and community advocates looks forward to working with you to develop this critical relief program.

Regards,

Advocates for Children NJ  
American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey  
American Friends Service Committee  
American Workforce Association  
Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey  
Beacon Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
Blue Wave NJ  
CAIR-NJ  
Carevel Foundation  
Casa de Esperanza  
Casa Freehold  
CATA - The Farmworker Support Committee  
Center for Undocumented Students, St. Peter's University  
Central Jersey Coalition Against Endless War  
Central Jersey Democratic Socialists of America  
Central Jersey Progressive Democrats  
Central Unitarian Church Social Action Team  
Cooper River Indivisible  
CWA Local 1037  
Define America Rutgers-Camden  
El Pueblo Unido of Atlantic City  
Faith in New Jersey  
First Friends of NJ & NY  
Food and Water Watch  
Garden State Equality  
Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey  
Hudson County Central Labor Council  
Hudson County Progressive Democrats  
IFPTE Local 194  
Immigrant Justice Corps  
Ironbound Community Corporation  
Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund  
Latino Action Network  
Latino Action Network Foundation  
Laundry, Distribution and Food Service Joint Board, Workers United, SEIU  
Laundry Workers Center

LUPE PAC  
Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry  
Make the Road New Jersey  
Melinated Moms  
Morristown Unitarian Fellowship  
National Day Laborer Organizing Network  
National Domestic Workers Alliance  
National Immigration Law Center  
NJ 11th for Change  
NJ 08 for Progress  
New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice  
New Jersey Citizen Action  
New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition  
NJ State Industrial Union Council  
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice  
New Jersey Policy Perspective  
New Jersey Time to Care Coalition  
New Jersey Working Families Alliance  
New Labor  
Occupy Bergen County  
Our Revolution Essex County  
Parish Church of St. Mark's, Sea Girt  
Piscataway Progressive Democratic Organization  
Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey  
RU Dreamers  
RU Progressives  
Rutgers Camden Democrats  
SEIU 32BJ  
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network  
UndocuRutgers  
Unidad Latina en Acción NJ  
Union County Progressive Democrats  
United For Respect  
UU FaithAction New Jersey  
Victoria Foundation  
Volunteer Lawyers for Justice  
Women for Progress  
Wind of the Spirit, Immigrant Resource Center

