

NJSSA Executive Committee Meeting Lobbying Report
March 6, 2024

Budget Message:

On February 27th, Governor Phil Murphy delivered his seventh budget address, outlining his spending plan for FY25, to a joint session of the New Jersey State Senate and General Assembly. The \$55.9 billion budget proposal includes a surplus of \$6.1 billion to address potential economic uncertainties.

Governor Murphy highlighted his proposed budget focused on lowering costs and increasing opportunities for working and middle-class families and providing tax relief, including expanding the ANCHOR property tax relief program, increasing funding over \$900 million for public schools to fund the state's school funding formula fully, and to provide dedicated funding for NJ Transit.

The proposed budget was not without controversy, as the spending plan includes a new Corporate Transit Fee to help fill the upcoming deficit in NJ Transit. The proposed 2.5 percent tax would apply to corporations with income over \$10 million, but the levy would return to the first dollar earned. Once implemented, the fee would retroactively apply to income starting on January 1st of this year.

The administration estimates the new fee will raise a little more than \$1 billion in the 2025 fiscal year and about \$826 million in FY26. This new fee replaces the Corporation Business Tax surcharge, which sunset in December, that charged an additional 2.5 percent on companies with incomes over \$1 million. NJ Transit fares are planned to increase by 15 percent also to help fill some of the deficit in the agency.

The FY25 budget includes several "revenue raisers", such as the Corporate Transit Fee. Other increases proposed are a phase-out of a sales tax exemption on zero-emission vehicles, a warehouse fee on truck drop-offs, fees on broker-dealers, assessments on Health Maintenance Organizations, and fees on firearms.

Governor Murphy said he plans to follow through with a promised \$200 million installment to fund the senior property tax relief program StayNJ. Under the current fiscal year, \$100 million has already been allocated to the program, though benefits are scheduled to go out at the earliest start of 2026.

Murphy's proposal would drop the total charity care pool — which helps cover the cost of care for uninsured residents — for hospitals from \$342 million to \$137 million. However, the cut in charity care funds would be rerouted to a new Medicaid outpatient hospital supplemental state-directed payment. The proposal includes funding for primary care loan redemption and continued funds for psychiatric resident slots.

We expect more details to be available once the official FY25 Budget Book is released to the public, usually two weeks after the budget address. Governor Murphy must sign the budget into law before the July 1st constitutional deadline.

The budget address was the official start of budget season, where the Legislature is tasked with reviewing and revising the Governor's proposed plan. Over the next several weeks, the Legislature will hold budget hearings to review and tweak respective aspects of the proposed budget.

New Session – Bills of Interest

- **A944 – Munoz/Spearman** - Eliminates certain practice restrictions for advanced practice nurses. (Previously **S-1522/A-2286**)
 - This legislation would authorize APNs across all specialties – anesthesia, primary care, pediatrics, emergency medicine – to practice without physician supervision. Specifically, the bill would allow CRNAs to administer anesthesia without an anesthesiologist's involvement or supervision. The bill would also allow APNs to supervise other APNs and create a new licensure for CRNAs, called an APN-Anesthesia.
 - We were able to block further movement of this bill last session and will look out for the bill's Senate counterpart this session. We will again work with the Access to Care Coalition and issue calls to action when needed, along with additional PR campaign work.
- **S1975 – Vitale** - Creates "Midwifery Licensing Act;" modifies regulation of midwifery. (Previously **S-4042/A-5674**)
 - This legislation would authorize Certified Midwives and Certified Nurse Midwives to prescribe without any physician involvement or collaboration. This would set a dangerous precedent and allow physician extenders with less training than APNs to prescribe and practice independently. Maternal health reform has been a key initiative for First Lady Tammy Murphy.
 - We were also able to block further movement of this bill in the last session. We will again also work with the Access to Care Coalition, and issue calls to action when needed, along with additional digital media efforts. This bill does not yet have an Assembly counterpart.
- **A920/S354 – Reynolds Jackson** - Updates scope of practice of optometrists. (Previously **S-3841/A-5445**)
 - This legislation would expand the scope of practice for optometrists and permit them to perform laser surgery, injections into the eye, and remove skin cancer around the eye with a scalpel.

- The physician community will continue to stand collectively in opposition to scope expansion in all specialties and continue to support the physician-led, team approach to healthcare.
- **S2283 – Scutari** - "Psilocybin Behavioral Health Access and Services Act"; authorizes production and use of psilocybin to promote health and wellness; decriminalizes, and expunges past offenses involving, psilocybin production, possession, use, and distribution. (Previously **S-2934/A-4911**)
 - This legislation is part of an effort spearheaded by Senate President Scutari to set up a framework for the legalized use of psilocybin to treat mental health in the state. Under the bill, anyone over 21 would be allowed to use psilocybin and grow it at home, with no prescription, on the premise that it carries therapeutic benefits for trauma, PTSD, substance use disorder, and chronic illness.
- **A3450/S1941 Quijano/Vitale** - Establishes minimum registered professional nurse staffing standards for hospitals and ambulatory surgery facilities and certain DHS facilities.
 - No movement
- **A1819 Conaway** - Restricts use of restrictive employment covenants for physicians and nurses.
 - No movement
 - No Senate companion bill
- **A378 Stanley** - Requires health insurance carriers, health care providers, and hospitals and health care facilities to change manner of communications of protected health information under certain circumstances.
 - There was no Senate counterpart last session, and one was not introduced this session. This is the relevant section: Healthcare providers providing covered services will also be included in the restrictions imposed by the bill. A provider will be prohibited from providing:
 - (1) any personally identifying information of the covered person;
 - (2) the nature of the covered services provided to the covered person; or
 - (3) claim related information to any mailing address, telephone number, or other method of contact other than as designated by the covered person.
 - Passed in AFI
 - No Senate companion
- **A2803 Greenwald** - extends authorization for out of state health care practitioners and recent graduates of health care training programs to practice in NJ
 - Passed Assembly Regulated Professions
 - No Senate companion

- **A3451 Quijano - family leave law lowering threshold from 30 employees to 5**
 - Passed Assembly Labor and Assembly Appropriations
 - Passed full Assembly
 - No Senate companion
- **A944 Spearman/S1983 Vitale - APN independent practice bill**
 - Introduced and referred to Assembly Health
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- **S982 Corrado - modifier 25 bill - no assembly counterpart yet**
 - Introduced and referred to senate commerce
 - MSNJ leading and supporting
- **A3683 Quijano/S2700 Vitale - Nurse staffing ratios bill**
 - ASCs oppose
 - MSNJ no official position yet

Conaway for Congress - fundraiser event for docs.

- Hosted by MSNJ docs
- 3/18 in Colts Neck from 6:30 - 8:30pm
- \$1,000 contribution
- Cannot accept PAC contributions