



# Urban Mayors Press



## President's Corner

Dear New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Members,

As Mayor of the City of Newark and President of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA), I would like to thank you for your dedicated service as NJUMA members and for collectively working together to address various issues impacting our cities.

As I look back on this year, I reflect on our collective work with appreciation and gratitude to have such committed colleagues to work alongside to advance our state's urban centers. This year has been one of many challenges and accomplishments but one thing that remains clear is the need to advocate even harder for policies that will benefit all of our residents. One of our advocacy efforts in which the NJUMA will continue to focus on in 2022 is public safety and ensuring the safety and wellness of our residents. Moreover, a full review of this year's activities, authored by *Urban Mayors Press* editor Ishiya Hayes, who supports the NJUMA through her role as the Associate Director/Senior Policy Analyst of the Urban Mayors Policy Center, John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research, Kean University can be found on page 2.

Additionally, I am grateful that after two years we have returned to the NJ League of Municipalities (NJLUM) Conference. I would like to thank President Kovach and Executive Director Michael Cerra for their leadership in creating a safe and informative conference experience for all attendees. I would like to especially thank each and every one of you, our State legislative leaders, and all of our event attendees for making the NJLUM events at the NJLUM Conference a success! The NJUMA looks forward to working with incoming League President Bill Pikolycky to advance our State. I would also like to thank Ms. Hayes and all the staff at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University for coordinating the NJUMA activities from start to finish. It would not have been possible without your attention to detail, support, well-thought out planning and content matter. Among the issues that we covered during the League Conference was civilian complaint review boards (CCRB). I would like to especially thank Assemblywoman Angela V. McKnight for joining us Mayors on our League Session panel to push for the passage of her legislation (A4656) which will give NJ Mayors the option to create CCRBs in their respective communities. This is a bill that the NJUMA has long-supported and I along with my colleagues in the Association will continue to stand and advocate for the passage of this critical legislation. In addition, thank you to our federal supporters from Senator Booker's Office, the USDA, and the federal EPA for the insightful and resourceful information they provided at the NJUMA's Policy Breakfast.

In this issue of the *Urban Mayors Press* we have various articles to provide information on resources for your municipalities. These include articles on the NJ Department of Community Affairs' guidance on how tenants can avoid eviction, NJ Economic Development Authority's assistance programs for businesses, how the NJ Business Action Center is aiding businesses to prepare for the state's single-use plastic bag ban, articles on how Mayors can increase solar energy, the need for more electric school buses, brownfields resources, obtaining insurance in the cannabis industry and much more! Additionally, I would like to thank my colleagues Mayor Kelly, Mayor Green, and Mayor Lora for their contributions to this issue, which focuses on our young people and maximizing redevelopment efforts.

Last but certainly not least, Kean University in which the NJUMA is supported by has been named the state's first urban research institution of higher education. Congratulations to Dr. Lamont Repelot for this major accomplishment and for his support of the NJUMA. We look forward to the year ahead and maximizing the benefits of this designation, which will afford our municipalities more research opportunities and support. We have an exciting year ahead of us.

In closing, I would like to wish all NJUMA members and everyone reading this publication Happy Holidays and a very Happy and healthy New Year!

Sincerely,

The Honorable Ras J. Baraka  
 Mayor of Newark, NJ  
 President of the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

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# The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association: 2021 and Beyond

By: Ishiya A. Hayes, Associate Director/Senior Policy Analyst, Urban Mayors Policy Center  
John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research, Kean University  
Editor of the *Urban Mayors Press*



2021 has been a transitional year for the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA). Beginning in January the Association's leadership changed with Mayor Ras J. Baraka, City of Newark, becoming the NJUMA President. Additionally, the suite of executive committee members also shifted to include Mayor Adrian O. Mapp, City of Plainfield, Vice President, regional officers Mayor Dwayne D. Warren Esq., City of Orange Township, Northern NJ VP, Mayor W. Reed Gusciora, City of Trenton, Central NJ VP, Mayor Marty Small Sr., Southern NJ VP, and Mayor Albert B. Kelly, City of Bridgeton, President Emeritus. A couple of months later in March, the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research, in which the NJUMA is housed, moved to Kean University. Although there were various shifts in the structure of the organization the driving force of the Association stayed intact – the practice of collectively working together to advance policies to improve the quality of life in urban centers. This year the NJUMA's policy agenda included an array of issues ranging from ensuring equity in housing and the State's new cannabis industry, eliminating the digital divide, and opposing legislation that would impose wage requirements for many construction projects in urban centers.

Throughout the year the NJUMA has advocated for policies to improve public safety in NJ municipalities. The Association strongly supports the passage of A4656 (civilian complaint review board (CCRB) legislation). This bill if passed will afford Mayors the option to establish CCRBs in their communities and appropriate funding to do this work. NJUMA President Ras J. Baraka, City of Newark has the state's first CCRB in his municipality and has long called for the expansion of this tool to create transparency and increase public safety in communities throughout the state. To further push for the passage of and bring awareness to this legislation the NJUMA, along with bill sponsor Assemblywoman Angela V. McKnight, hosted the "Building Community: The Necessity of Civilian Complaint Review Boards" panel at the 106th NJ League of Municipalities Conference. The NJUMA has and will continue to stand with the bill sponsors to advocate for the swift passage of this legislation. Furthermore, excited about returning to the Conference for the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the NJUMA successfully hosted two other events. These included the "NJUMA Policy Breakfast on Federal Resources" and the NJUMA Annual Reception – which reached a record number of attendees from the public and private sectors.



The NJUMA has also prioritized additional efforts to improve public safety in the state's urban centers by calling for policies to decrease gun violence. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic we have seen the uptick in violence in cities nationwide. Many deaths have been attributed to gun violence and in many communities the death tolls rival records set in the 1980s and 1990s. Given this, Mayor Andre Sayegh, City of Paterson, along with fellow mayors in the NJUMA held events in Paterson throughout the year and called for amendments to the New Jersey Criminal Justice Reform Act. Desired amendments to the law include eliminating the permissions for individuals with gun charges to be released from custody during the pre-trial period. While bail reform serves as a necessary component to criminal justice reform the NJUMA believes that granting the release of individuals with illegal gun charges increases the likelihood of gun violence in communities. Often times urban Mayors have to deal with the reality that a resident with a gun charge was released and subsequently became either the shooter or the shooting victim, which often leads to preventable fatalities. The NJUMA will continue to push for amendments to the law and looks forward to working with policymakers and their partners to bring about the appropriate changes to protect residents and keep them safe.

Furthermore, the NJUMA recognizes the need for recreational activities to help create safe environments for positive youth development in urban communities. Thus, the Association strongly supports Senator Rice's legislation S4005 which would appropriate funding for the establishment of youth programs especially in the state's historically underserved communities. The goal of the legislation is to provide funding to support programming and rehabilitate as many blighted properties and old recreational facilities to transform them into innovative centers for NJ youth. These may include the establishment of STEM/ technology labs, SMART parks, and community centers so that young people can partake in constructive programs where they can learn, grow, and work year-round. The NJUMA will continue to take wrap-around and multi-level approaches to ensuring a positive and safe environment for all residents, especially youth.

Recognizing the value in business districts and economic development opportunities, the NJUMA thanks the NJ Legislature, Governor Phil Murphy and Lt. Governor Shelia Oliver for the passage of the State's new UEZ law. Restoring the NJ Urban Enterprise Zone Program has been a major goal of the Association for several years. In 2020 the NJUMA Urban Enterprise Zone subcommittee, which is chaired by Mayor J. Christian Bollwage, City of Elizabeth, and consists of Mayors, UEZ Coordinators, and Directors of Economic Development, regularly convened and drafted policy language to inform the UEZ legislation prior to it being passed. These recommendations were based off of the needs of small businesses, municipal stakeholders in UEZs, and the *New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zone Program Assessment 2019* – a study completed by the John S. Watson Institute which determined the viability of the Program, why the State should reinstate it in urban communities, and how to restructure it to maximize economic success.

In reference to federal policies, earlier this year the NJUMA had the pleasure of convening with its Congressional members. This meeting which was hosted by Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman included all NJ Congressional members. This convening afforded the NJUMA the opportunity to provide firsthand accounts of the needs in urban centers and to inform policy in Washington, DC. The NJUMA is thankful to see several of the issues they raised be addressed in federal policies and for the many efforts their federal representatives have made on their behalf. Association members look forward to utilizing the resources that were and will be afforded to them due to the American Rescue Plan, Build Back Better, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. In the New Year the NJUMA looks forward to continuing to work with their federal representatives.

Moreover, since the onset of the pandemic the NJUMA has regularly met with the Governor's Office and State Departments to address issues in their respective communities pertaining to governing amid the coronavirus pandemic and more. The organization thanks Governor Murphy and his administration for the opportunity to work together and looks forward to continuing to maintain its longstanding working relationship moving forward. The NJUMA appreciates the opportunities it has had throughout the year to work with State Departments on relative issues, these include the Office of the Attorney General, Cannabis Regulatory Commission, Civil Service Commission, Department of Corrections, and Department of Community Affairs. The NJUMA would like to especially thank NJ Department of Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli for her several special briefings to urban Mayors this year on how the State is supporting vulnerable populations amid the COVID-19 pandemic and how local leaders can work with the State to support coronavirus relief efforts. The NJUMA looks forward to continuing to work with the great State of New Jersey to improve the lives of their constituents.

In 2022 the NJUMA also looks forward to working with its various stakeholders and partners. Among the statewide entities that the NJUMA plans to partner with in the upcoming year are the Brownfields Center @ NJIT (more information on this can be found on page 7 of this publication), the Anti-Poverty Network of New Jersey, the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, the NJ League of Municipalities, and legislators including the members of the Legislative Black Caucus and so many more great partners!

Housed at Kean University, the state's first designated urban research university, (more information on this can be found on page 3), the NJUMA has an unprecedented opportunity to receive top-notch research assistance and resources. The Association anticipates a bright future as the University continues to grow under the leadership of President Dr. Lamont Repellot. As the nation's only organization solely dedicated to providing support to urban Mayors, the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association is in a unique position to positively impact communities, and with the right partnerships and research the NJUMA will continue to do just that for the rest of 2021 and beyond!

## Kean Named New Jersey's First Urban Research University



### *Kean joins the state's list of elite public research universities*

New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed into law a bill designating Kean University as the state's first urban research university, recognizing Kean's growing role in conducting research and generating solutions to issues in urban communities statewide.

"This designation is a transformative development for Kean and positions the University as a statewide leader in research and policy for our underserved cities and urban communities. It will change the course of this institution and provide new opportunities for the students we serve," said Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D. "As the state's only urban research university, we can also make a real difference in the lives of New Jerseyans living in urban communities as we help urban centers build stronger futures."

The bill received unanimous support in both the New Jersey Senate and Assembly. As New Jersey's first urban research university, Kean joins Rutgers University, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Rowan University and Montclair State University as a state-designated public research university.

"With this designation, Kean's world-class programs and research can stretch even farther beyond the borders of our campus, into cities and urban communities in need of the insight and targeted attention that we can provide," said Kellie LeDet, chief government affairs officer at Kean. "We are grateful for the support of the governor and other lawmakers who recognize the growing role Kean plays across New Jersey, particularly in urban communities."

This designation will elevate Kean's profile across the nation, enhance faculty and student recruitment, increase student Tuition Aid Grant (TAG) awards and boost competitiveness for research grants.

Kean is also actively pursuing a R2 designation by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Senior Vice President for Research Jeffrey H. Toney, Ph.D., noted there are more than 30 research centers and institutes at Kean USA and Wenzhou-Kean University in China. He said highly competitive federal research grants have more than tripled at Kean since 2017, and the University will now be eligible for even more research funding.

"Kean shines among the constellation of public state universities because our true north is equity, access and opportunity," Toney said. "Our diverse students engage in research and creative projects in the sciences, arts and humanities, learning outside of the classroom along with their peers at the very best universities. Many live in urban communities themselves and will now have an opportunity to support their own cities and towns."

The John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research, which was established at Kean in the spring, plays a critical role in researching issues affecting the state's urban centers and developing solutions to address them. The Institute works with 32 mayors from the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association and is a vital resource in informing urban decision-making and public policy on critical issues such as sustainable growth, economic development, water quality and infrastructure, education, environmental justice, health and public safety.

"The leaders of this state have long linked New Jersey's future and prosperity to the renaissance and continued revitalization of our state's urban centers," Kean Senior Vice President for External Affairs Joseph Youngblood, Ph.D., said. "There are no cookie-cutter policy approaches to the issues impacting our diverse urban contexts. Through strong partnerships with lawmakers, industry leaders and community organizations, the Institute will provide evidence, analysis and recommendations that help move all of our urban communities forward."

Kean was also recently named one of 25 colleges and universities nationwide selected for a U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) University Center grant to promote innovation and strengthen regional economies. Through the more than \$1 million, five-year grant, Kean will create the Center for Business/Workforce Development, Innovation & Social Entrepreneurship, the first of its kind in the state. The Center will work to strengthen regional economies statewide by providing support, expertise, applied research and technical assistance to identify and address the specific regional needs of urban centers.

Repollet said the urban research designation and the EDA grant will both help Kean continue the important work of conducting research on issues that impact the state's urban centers.

"We take responsibility for not just identifying the challenges in our cities but finding the solutions that are replicable, scalable and sustainable to move us forward," Repollet said. "We look forward to bringing our faculty and students into this research so they can contribute directly to learning projects that will impact their own communities."



# Court System Must Do a Better Job of Monitoring Teens After Their Arrest

By: Mayor Ras J. Baraka, City of Newark  
President, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association



The discussion over juvenile crime and justice needs to be started with hopefulness because to do otherwise does a disservice to the young people of this city and the city itself.

In 2020, our high schools were first in a national study of 50 cities that measured the number of students who exceeded expectations based on socioeconomic and racial statistics.

This year, four Newark High Schools won the national [Great Schools College Gold Award](#), for continuously preparing students for successful university careers.

I mention this because the number of teenagers in our juvenile justice system is a mere fraction of the city's high school students. Thousands of Newark teenagers graduate and live productive lives never having been in any trouble.

However, the lives of those who are lured by the streets are equally important. There are no bad kids. There are bad circumstances they are born into, cycles of poverty and trauma that we must not let dictate the outcome of their lives.

In that spirit, I am calling on the Essex County Court system to better monitor the activities and whereabouts of teenagers remanded to their parents or guardians after being arrested, and order them into programs the city has developed to set them on a better path.

Since the courts are weighed down by backlogs due to COVID closures, we are seeing a tragic uptick in cases involving minors with long arrest records who are being passively monitored by the county - which has one, single employee keeping an eye on the movements of these troubled teens during business hours, and none at night or on the weekends.

Our Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery offers these at-risk juveniles pathways to the same success the overwhelming majority of our teenage students enjoy through education and character-building experiences of public service, academic contests, sports, the arts, and performances at our public schools.

We've held several sessions of the "Newark Street Academy" for juveniles who have been exposed to the justice system to prevent recidivism. In this program, we give these kids lessons in entrepreneurial skills and even seed money to start small, manageable businesses, or to buy and sell merchandise on the internet. Attendance is required, accountability is demanded, and lives get turned around.

On Nov. 20th, for instance, our academy members held a pop-up shop, featuring their fashion, skincare, and other designer creations, and served food from their new catering businesses.

The city made national headlines last year amid the "defund the police" outcry for our common sense approach to funding community-based peacekeeping efforts by diverting five percent of the police budget to create our Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery.

The office is the umbrella organization for a variety of programs designed to combat violence, mentor our young people, and the keys to success. In many of these programs, we treat their involvement as employment, paying them \$15 an hour to show up on time, every day, to develop a disciplined work ethic.

Three weeks ago, we announced an investment of \$19 million for violence reduction initiatives over the next three years, partially funded by the Biden administration's American Rescue Plan.

We're calling on more community organizations to apply for these funds to develop or continue programs to rescue our young people who have witnessed violence, drug addiction and other dysfunction since childhood from repeating those behaviors.

Equally important, we have a multitude of city employees and other concerned individuals from faith-based and secular civic organizations willing to mentor these kids.

Because we know them, and their families, because they are our neighbors, the city is uniquely qualified to work with these teenagers to improve their lives, for their own good, and for the public safety of the city.

What we need now is for the county family court, which handles all juvenile cases, to order these at-risk youthful offenders into proven city programs rather than simply remand them to their homes, and then lose track of them.

The current system, simply put, creates tragedies waiting to happen.

In the past three years, there have been 27 juvenile homicides. Twenty-one involved gunshot wounds, and two more were assaults. In that time, 14 juveniles were charged with murder.

One of those young men had been previously arrested multiple times for serious crimes, such as assaults, carjacking, and weapons charges. Each time he was remanded to home confinement until he was eventually charged with murder.

Last weekend, a 17-year-old was shot and killed and three other juveniles were wounded. The boy who was killed had been arrested 10 times for aggravated assault and weapons charges.

According to police, there are only 38 juveniles who commit repeated egregious crimes with no punitive consequence or ordered pathway to rehabilitation. This year, they are among 130 repeat offenders. These are manageable numbers.

We have the resources and the will to reach these young people. But we need the county courts and juvenile monitoring system to recognize those resources exist and begin to order these young people into our programs. To not do so puts the public, and the kids themselves, at unnecessary risk.

## Lowering the Voting Age

By: Mayor Albert B. Kelly, City of Bridgeton  
President Emeritus, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association



Over the past several years, I have advocated for lowering the voting age so that 15, 16, and 17 year-olds could vote, if not across the board in federal elections, then in State, County and Municipal elections. If that sounds like too much too fast for some, then perhaps we should focus on allowing municipalities to lower their voting age for local elections and encouraging them to do so.

Back then, what I read on the issue pointed to studies from Austria showing that extending voting rights to 16 and 17 year-olds results in higher turnouts for first-time voters and that these voters continue to turn out at the polls years later. Data from Denmark noted that 18 year olds were more likely to cast a "first vote" than 19 year olds and that each passing month of age resulted in further declines in "first vote" turnout.

The National Youth Rights Association noted a "trickle up" effect when 16 and 17 year-olds were able to vote—they were more engaged on the issues affecting them and their families. Apparently participating nurtures a civic-mindedness that lasts a lifetime in these young people.

I also highlighted two Maryland communities (Hyattsville and Takoma Park) that extended municipal voting to 16 and 17 year olds successfully and noted that several nations including Austria, Germany, and the UK extended voting to 16 year olds for national and local elections. So the idea has been studied, including by Rutgers in 2011. I also shared some additional reasons for lowering the voting age.

For example, tens of thousands of juveniles are tried as adults each year in this country many ranging in age from 15-17 years old. They can be punished as adults, but they can't vote? Many 16 and 17 year-olds begin to drive, hold their first jobs, pay taxes and comprise a much sought-after consumer group. They can spend and we'll take their money, but we don't let them vote.

At the age of 16, many teens start making life-altering decisions like where to go to college or even if they should go to college. At this point in their lives they start picking career tracks or they take SAT tests where the scores shape their futures, yet they can't vote in our elections.

I thought back to when we lowered the voting age from 21 down to 18. At that time, the argument was that young people could be drafted, but they couldn't vote for the people with the power to send them off to fight and die in the jungles of Vietnam or wherever. That was a powerful argument back then and the voting age was lowered.

These days, it's not about getting drafted into the military, but with climate change and global warming and greenhouse gases, we're living at moment when the next generation and the generation after that will have to live with the mess we leave behind. My point is that we might do a hell of a lot better on this issue if young people had the ability to organize and vote us out of office.

If you doubt the need to hold us adults accountable, consider that at the most recent global climate meetings known as "COP26" which stands for "conference of the parties" under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, attendees got all lathered up over whether or not they should "Phase-out" coal as opposed to "Phase-down". We might say that constitutes progress but to the young, it's the difference between asphyxiating and suffocating.

But maybe the issue isn't climate change; maybe its gun control and the body count from school shootings and on our streets over the last how many years or overdose deaths from the opioid crisis or the way this generation lost a year and half of schooling because of the pandemic.

If there is one thing I know, it is that young people are not nearly as jaded and cynical as the rest of us just yet and while they're young with enough hope and energy to change the trajectory of the world they will inherit, let's help them out a little by giving them the chance to vote.

## S.O.S.: Saving Our Sister

By: Mayor Ted R. Green, City of East Orange  
Member, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association



Most people are familiar with the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." This saying is quite often followed by an anecdotal story to support it. But what happens when the village fails? What happens when a child slips through the cracks?

For almost the entire month of October 2021, my village of East Orange was polarized by the disappearance of 14-year-old East Orange resident Jashyah Moore, who was last seen at a local store on busy Central Avenue on the morning of October 14. Our East Orange Police Division, the Essex County Sheriff's Office, the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, the FBI, and surrounding municipalities and law enforcement agencies, joined forces to find this missing child.

After an intense search that included combing the lake at Monte Irvin Orange Park not far from Jashyah's home and hundreds of community volunteers going out night after night, she was found safe in New York City on November 4. And as a community, we all breathed a collective sigh of relief.

However, the joy of her return was quickly diminished as we found out more about her disappearance. We learned that Jashyah was not kidnapped as her mother, Jamie Moore, insisted over and over again.

Instead, we learned she ran away to escape what she described to Essex County Prosecutor's Office as years of emotional and physical abuse. The prosecutor's office arrested and charged her mother with two counts of second-degree endangering the welfare of a child, which included "allegations of physical abuse and also neglect."

Jashyah and her 3-year-brother were promptly removed from their mother's custody by the state Division of Child Protection and Permanency and have been placed in a foster home while her mother remains on house arrest pending a trial.

Upon learning of her detailed accounts of abuse and neglect, questions flooded my brain and I desperately began to seek answers. "How did we let this happen? "What can we do to protect our children?"

We know that every household isn't perfect and living situations vary due to circumstances beyond my control, but we must have a safety net to catch our children when they fall.

My pledge to the City of East Orange's youth has always been to support, promote and create avenues for growth, experience, education, and overall wellness. Yes, we must hold negligent parents accountable, but we also must learn how to fill the gap for our children so that their cries for help do not go unnoticed.

# Former Brownfields Site Transformed, and it Only Took 20 Years

By: Mayor Hector Lora, City of Passaic  
Member, New Jersey Urban Mayors Association



Established as City of Passaic in 1873 and located on the banks of the Passaic River, the City of Passaic was an industrial hub from the late 1800s through the 1960s. Our City was home to major manufacturers of textiles, rubber, plastics and metal works. Unknown and uncontrolled in those early days of manufacturing were the effects of byproducts on the environment. Only since the passage of environmental laws and regulations since the 1970s have we gained an understanding of the negative and even toxic effects of manufacturing processes and their by-products. It is hard to believe that young residents of the City in the 1920s and 30s actually swam in the Passaic River adjacent to the factories that were spewing chemicals into the same location.

Under my administration, the City has successfully addressed a long vacant and brownfields former industrial site which is now transformed into a gleaming, state-of-the-art 111,000 sq. ft. logistics center at 26 Jefferson Street, Passaic. The \$20 million new facility only took 18 months but the path that brought us to the goal line took decades.

The industrial use of the property began in the late 1800s when the Pantasote Leather Company began operation. The company manufactured an artificial leather which was “durable, waterproof, odorless and unaffected by heat”, according to the company’s advertising. The product was widely used in rail cars and busses. Over time, the product line expanded to various plastics. Pantasote ceased operations at the site and the City foreclosed on the site and sold it to a private entity in 2000. In 2004, the property was included in the City’s Eastside Redevelopment Plan, and its designation as an Area In Need of Redevelopment was affirmed in 2012 during my tenure as Councilman.

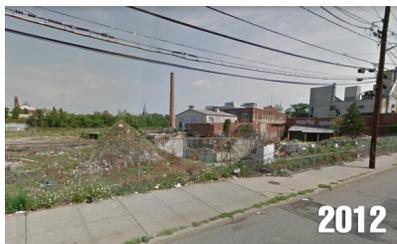
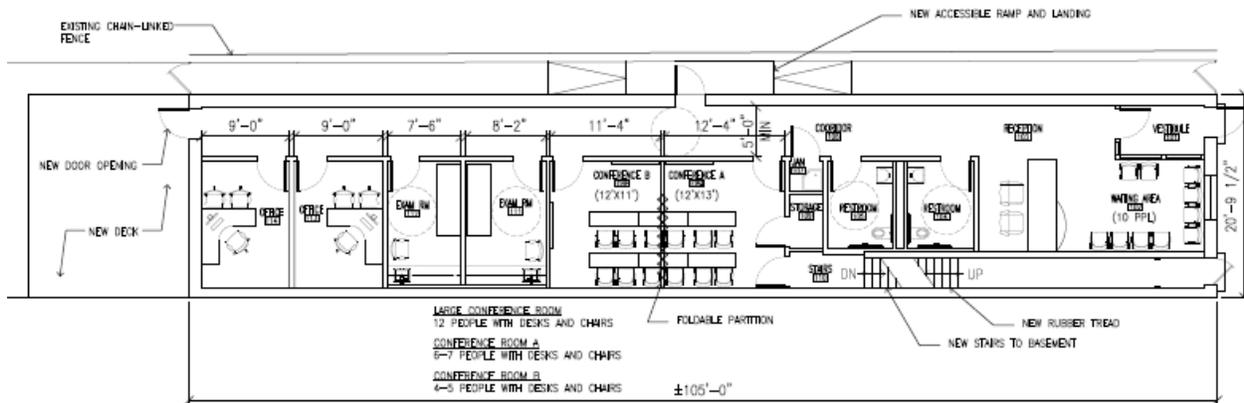
The major obstacle to the redevelopment of the property was its contamination. Four major issues affected the site; First, many of the existing buildings contained asbestos. As demolition at the site was incomplete, this posed the risk as friable and airborne particles. Second, an underground tank where phalates, a softener in plastics, were stored, was excavated and leaked. Thirdly, groundwater contamination at the site was identified by NJDEP’s testing. Lastly, radioactive materials were found at the site primarily in areas where the aforementioned phalate tanks had leaked. While the site floundered for nearly two decades, under my direction the City took an aggressive approach with the former owner. In 2018, I took an active role by directing an amendment to the redevelopment plan that would allow warehousing as a permitted use. Ideally, the City desires investment and development that create the maximum number of employment opportunities for residents as well as providing tax ratable and improve the area directly affected in terms of quality of life and aesthetics. Considering the need to remediate contamination at the site and the challenges we face with brownfields in urban communities, as Mayor I had to make the decision to prioritize the remediation for the betterment of the community. The re-designation was a catalyst that sparked greater interest and opened up additional resources that eventually led a national firm, IDI Logistics to open their facility at this location. It is important to be open to creative and innovative options in order to make necessary initiatives and visions move forward. Buy-in from colleagues on City Council as well as a clear message of support to responsible developers make all the difference.

For the City, the benefits of the new project include new jobs. Based on their experience, IDI expects that approximately 100 jobs will be created linked to the new operations. This is especially important to our community, which already has a thriving distribution sector.

Since the completion of this project, my administration has been approached by a second national logistics company to redevelop another brownfields site. I am encouraged that we are able to contribute to the health of our community by resolving these long-standing environmental problems, while at the same expanding jobs in the community and adding our tax ratables. In continuing the transformation of this neighborhood, my Administration is in the process of acquiring and rehabilitating an existing property that is within close proximity of the IDI Logistics site and consists of an abandoned first floor commercial space and two residential apartments on the second and third floors that is set to be converted into a COVID-19 medical resource facility. The facility will provide the community various services such as testing, tracing, immunizations, counseling and educational programs that focus on COVID-19. This facility will also provide the city an opportunity to collaborate with other organizations in an overall effort to foster and maintain a healthy community.

The purchase and rehabilitation of the property was funded through CDBG CARES Act dollars in which \$350,000 was utilized towards acquisition costs and \$679,590 was utilized towards construction costs. The total cost budgeted for the project is \$1,029,590.

On December 2, 2021 the City of Passaic received notice from HUD that our CARES ACT funding for the project was approved and that the City can move forward beginning December 17, 2021.



# The NJ Brownfields Assistance Center @ NJIT

**Free technical assistance to NJ counties, municipalities, and nonprofits!**



Does your community have closed commercial properties such as gas stations, dry cleaners, and banks; vacant mills; former commercial agricultural lands; or abandoned factories? Do you want these former industrial and commercial properties (brownfields) put back into productive use? Our team of planners, engineers, environmental scientists, and social scientists brings tools, strategies, resources, partnerships, subject matter experts, and education to brownfields-challenged communities free of charge!

- Wondering how to navigate the NJ regulatory process? We'll explain it.
- Wondering where to get funding to identify contamination and clean up contaminated properties? We'll show you.
- Wondering how to engage your community in developing a vision for the redevelopment of a contaminated property? We'll help you.
- Wondering how to market your brownfield sites? We'll show you.
- Have so many brownfield properties you just don't know which ones to focus on? We'll evaluate and prioritize them for you.
- Wondering how to get the right consultant or contractor on board? We'll help with the solicitation process.
- Wondering how to transform former industrial and commercial sites into new community assets? We'll show you how.
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# How NJ Mayors Can Use Federal Funds to Lower Energy Burdens and Go Solar

By: Odette Mucha, Regulatory Director, Mid-Atlantic, Vote Solar  
and Elena Weissmann, Regional Director, Mid-Atlantic, Vote Solar

The \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that became law in mid-November funds a few important programs that can help cities and states pursue clean energy projects to benefit working families in NJ. [The Build Back Better Act](#) (BBBA) would do even more to address the climate crisis while reducing energy burdens. [It recently passed the House](#), and will hopefully pass the Senate by year's end.

Now is the time for local governments to seize the opportunity and take advantage of these federal funds. By investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that serve families in disadvantaged communities, mayors can advance climate change progress and do so in a way that makes our energy system more affordable and equitable. Mayors can lead the charge by creating a vision for their communities, developing innovative and smart plans to achieve those goals, and getting together that all-important list of "shovel ready" projects. Preparing now can ensure these federal investments support NJ communities and maximize public benefits, all while reducing climate pollution as rapidly and efficiently as possible.

The Infrastructure bill includes \$73 billion for energy and power. Here are some highlights that can support cities and states as they pursue clean energy:

**1. Local governments:** \$550 million funding to go directly to local or state governments to support clean energy projects through the [Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant](#) (EECBG) program. This program was initially launched under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009 and supported efficiency retrofits and renewable energy projects.

To see an example of these funds in action, look no further than the Garden State! In 2010, the [city of Woodbridge used EECBG funding](#) to create a green technology park, retrofit several of its municipal buildings, and develop a climate action plan. Retrofitting their municipal buildings saved taxpayers \$120,000 annually in avoided energy costs.

**2. Schools:** The Infrastructure bill contains new funding schools can use directly: \$500 million for clean energy and \$5 billion for electric school buses. These funds can help schools and broadly promote climate and economic resilience in their communities. For example, fitting schools with solar panels and back-up battery storage is a proven method of [creating local resilience hubs](#). In cities across the country, solar and storage on community buildings have served as [self-sufficient emergency shelters](#) during power outages while also saving money on the buildings' electric bills and inspiring the next generation of clean energy innovators. Electrifying school bus fleets also creates a ripple effect on public health, by drastically improving children's exposure to harmful pollutants that can cause asthma and other conditions.

**3. State programs:** \$4.5 billion for states to pursue clean energy planning, programs and projects, detailed in our [blog post here](#) with highlights below:

\$3.5 billion for the [Weatherization Assistance Program](#), which provides energy efficiency upgrades (and, if the NJ Department of Consumer Affairs agrees to it, rooftop solar) to income-qualified families.

\$500 million for the [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#), which funds direct utility bill assistance to income-qualified families, up to 25% of which can be used to support weatherization

\$500 million for the [State Energy Program](#), which funds the [NJ Clean Energy Program](#) to undertake programs like those detailed in this document of past federal clean energy funding in NJ [here](#).

Millions of New Jerseyans live in overburdened communities, with energy burdens up to three times as high as their wealthier counter-

parts in other parts of the state. These funding streams not only reduce energy usage, but also help provide critical savings at a time when so many are struggling.

**4. Clean transportation:** \$7.5 billion for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, in addition to significant sums for transit, passenger rail, and other measures to reduce greenhouse gases in transportation. Electrifying bus fleets and expanding access to public transportation are key demands of New Jersey's leading environmental justice groups. These funds can get cars off the road, reduce pollutants in New Jersey's environmental justice communities, and help create good jobs in the transit sector.

## Highlights in the Build Back Better Act

The Build Back Better Act provides for \$555 billion in climate change funding, including critically important provisions that would make solar more accessible and affordable for all. Here are some highlights we're most excited to see in the [latest bill that passed the House](#):

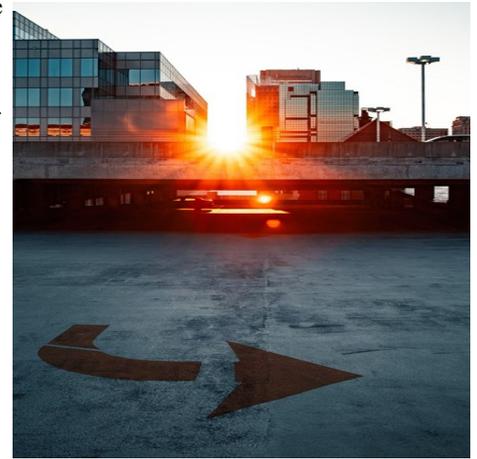
**1. Grants:** \$7 billion in EPA grants to support state and local governments to deploy zero-emission technologies (like rooftop and community solar) to serve disadvantaged communities. An additional \$22 billion in the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund will also be available for a wide variety of solutions, and 40% of these funds must serve disadvantaged communities.

**2. Tax credits to lower the cost of going solar.** Tax credits are the main federal incentive for solar and wind energy. The BBBA renews the federal investment tax credit (ITC) to 30% off the costs of solar projects. Plus, it creates an additional 10% tax credit for renewable energy systems located in low-income communities, or an additional 20% credit for systems serving low-income households.

The bill also importantly makes the ITC available to non-taxable entities such as cities, Tribes, and schools. Finally, the bill makes the tax credit "direct pay" meaning, it makes the full value of the solar tax credit to everyone that purchases a solar system, regardless of their federal income tax bill. The current draft delays the start of this provision until 2024, and we'd like to see it available in 2022 or 2023 at the latest.

NJ mayors now face a unique opportunity to apply for federal funding to advance innovative clean energy projects and programs that can directly benefit their constituents' pocketbooks as well as the planet. To help address the [disproportionate concentration](#) of federal funding for climate resiliency in wealthy, white communities, resources like the [Justice40 Accelerator](#) can help community based organizations to engage and participate in the process.

With climate change threatening our cities and clean energy technologies developing faster each year, the moment is ripe for New Jersey's urban mayors to take advantage of federal funding opportunities to bring clean energy solutions home in the way that works best for their communities. By coordinating funding plans with local organizations and centering the wishes of constituents most hard hit by climate change and fossil fuel pollution, urban mayors can use these two federal funding bills to usher their cities into a cleaner, more resilient and equitable future.



# Charging Forward Into Electric School Bus Infrastructure in NJ

By: Melissa Miles, Executive Director, New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance  
and Doug O'Malley, Executive Director, Environment NJ

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The statistics are shocking and yet all too familiar. Greater Camden experienced 49 days of unhealthy air last year. For Greater Newark-Jersey City, the tally was 47 days. According to the American Lung Association's [State of the Air report](#), unhealthy levels of ozone and particle pollution qualify these two metro areas as some of our nation's most polluted. The impact on health and well-being is undeniable, with NJ cities reporting [asthma-related emergencies](#) at rates that far surpass their non-urban counterparts.

And too often, it's the youngest members of our community who bear the unequal burden of this pollution. Children are physiologically [more susceptible](#) than adults to the effects of air pollution, with documented impacts on respiratory health and even [academic performance](#).

To make matters worse for many young people statewide, unnecessary exposure to intense diesel pollution comes each time they step aboard their school bus. More than [15,000 diesel school buses](#) are in operation across New Jersey, exposing children to up to [12 times more air toxics](#) than ambient levels. These young passengers breathe in toxic fumes both at the bus stop and on board. As the bus moves, diesel pollution remains in the cabin – and more enters each time the doors are opened.

But the good news is that electric school buses are a viable technology *today*. They produce zero emissions – meaning clean, healthy air for children and drivers, and no greenhouse gases. And people are starting to notice.

[The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill](#), recently signed into law, includes \$2.5 billion dedicated solely to electric school buses. While this sum represents the largest investment in the technology to date, it falls far short of what's needed across the country to bring the benefits of zero emissions vehicles to all communities. [The upfront price tag for an electric school bus](#) is currently much higher than that of its diesel counterpart. And while electric school buses can save school districts [hundreds of thousands of dollars in the long-run](#), it is critical that state and federal governments offer procurement support in the form of funding and financing.

Thankfully, state lawmakers are working on legislation (S4077) to electrify school buses in New Jersey through a grant program run by the Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). This bill would fund the purchase of new electric school buses and the necessary charging infrastructure each year for three years in six school districts across the state, for a total of 18 school districts. School bus contractors are also eligible for funding through this new legislation. Considering there are nearly [11,000 contractor-owned school buses](#) in New Jersey, nearly 75% of all school buses in operation, it is crucial that contractors have access to this funding as well.

Half of the school districts are required, by the legislation, to be overburdened communities to ensure that those suffering the impacts of diesel pollution can reap the long overdue benefits of clean air from electric buses.

We particularly applaud this focus on environmental justice, because these issues of air pollution and poor air quality do not impact all New Jerseyans equally. Communities of color and lower income communities are at higher risk, as they tend to be exposed to higher concentrations of air pollution.

As the American Lung Association [explains](#), “Much of this inequity can be traced to the long history of systemic racism in the United States...decision-makers have found it easier to place sources of pollution, such as power plants, industrial facilities, landfills and highways in economically disadvantaged communities of color than in more affluent, whiter neighborhoods. The resulting disproportionate exposure to air pollution has contributed to high rates of emergency department visits for asthma and other diseases.”

The result is that certain communities across our state are subjected to more polluted, more dangerous air. In an [analysis](#) last decade, the cities in Essex County – namely Newark, East Orange, Irvington and Orange – saw the highest rates of asthma-related emergency department visits, at about 1.5 times the state average. 58.8% of all asthma-related emergency department visits from 2008 to 2012 came from Newark alone, despite the city only containing 35.6% of the county's population.

It's clear: to bring true environmental justice to our communities, we must address harmful air pollution. And to protect the youngest members of our cities, we need to ensure safe, clean air for their rides to and from school.

When we talk to young people in our communities, we're struck by the power of their futures and the possibilities they hold. As leaders, we owe it to the children in our schools to do everything in our power to keep them safe -- and that starts with the safe, healthy ride to school that electric school buses can provide.

The science is settled, and there's strong momentum for government action -- for communities statewide, the time is now for the tangible benefits offered by electric school buses.

## New Jersey Business Action Center is Helping Businesses Prepare for the Ban: Counting Down to NJ's 2022 Plastic Carryout Bag and Polystyrene Foam Ban

To reduce plastics pollution statewide, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy signed P.L. 2020, c117 into law on November 4, 2020 – prohibiting the provision or sale of single-use plastic carryout bags and polystyrene foam food service products in all stores and food service businesses statewide. The law also prohibits the provision or sale of single-use paper carryout bags by grocery stores that occupy 2,500 square feet or more, and mandates that plastic straws can only be provided upon request of the customer.

The New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC) and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) are working together to help businesses comply with what is commonly referred to as the “plastics ban law.” New Jersey businesses can start preparing now for implementation of the law, which will take effect on May 4, 2022. All types of businesses, for-profit and non-profit, who use plastic bags for merchandise and food are impacted.

With the ban, New Jersey takes an active leadership role in addressing the problem of plastic pollution with solutions to protect the environment for future generations. Most single-use plastic carryout bags end up in landfills, are incinerated, or accumulate in the environment. They litter and degrade the quality of waterways and oceans where they do not biodegrade, and through photo degradation release chemicals into the environment that are harmful to human health.

Reusable carryout bags made of materials specified in the law provide a durable, hygienic, and environmentally-friendly alternative. In efforts to help businesses align with regulations under the “plastics ban” law and source reusable bags and non-polystyrene foam food service products, the NJ Business Action Center has been required by the law to create a [Vendor Clearinghouse](https://business.nj.gov/bags/plastic-ban-law) - an online courtesy list of wholesale vendors who sell products that meet the requirements of the new law. Businesses can gain access to the courtesy list or sign up as a wholesale distributor by visiting <https://business.nj.gov/bags/plastic-ban-law>.

New Jersey is now one of many states limiting the use of single-use plastics: such as carryout plastic bags from stores and food-service businesses. By encouraging the use of reusable carryout bags and plastic straw reduction, New Jersey is doing its part to minimize plastic pollution and litter that pollute our roads, waterways, landfills, beaches, and oceans.

In 2020, the NJ State Legislature found that “one third of all plastics produced are single-use plastics and that an estimated 100 billion single-use plastic carryout bags and 25 billion Styrofoam plastic coffee cups are thrown away in the United States each year. Additionally, research has shown that plastics released in the

environment do not biodegrade and it is estimated that eight million tons of plastic end up in the oceans annually.

Plastic pollution is a growing scourge to the environment, in New Jersey, and beyond. As fellow New Jerseyans, we can each play a role in the reduction of plastic pollution in our communities - one plastic bag and straw at a time - to ensure a cleaner future for our neighbors, families, and children.

### About the New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC)

The New Jersey Business Action Center (NJBAC), housed within the New Jersey Department of State and operating under the leadership of Executive Director Melanie Willoughby, is a business-first resource that offers no-cost, confidential assistance to help businesses plan, start, operate, and grow. The team helps companies of all sizes save time and money by getting answers from government agencies, directing businesses to appropriate officials and contacts, and facilitating meetings and follow-ups from regulatory agencies. The NJBAC is responsible for educating businesses on how to properly comply with the “ban the plastic bag” law. For further information, visit our website where NJBAC business experts are available via a “Live Chat” and helpline at 1-800-JERSEY-7, Mon.-Fri., 8am-5pm, or follow us on Twitter at [@NJBAC](https://twitter.com/NJBAC). To learn more, visit: <https://www.business.nj.gov>.

### About the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP)

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) was established on April 22, 1970 – America’s first official Earth Day. Today, NJDEP employees through dozens of programs continue to advance innovative strategies to safeguard and enhance New Jersey’s air, water, and land and the health of all its residents. The NJDEP is responsible for the overall implementation of [P.L. 2020, c.117](https://www.nj.gov/dep/) including the adoption of implementing regulations. To learn more, visit: <https://www.nj.gov/dep/>.

### About the New Jersey Clean Communities Council (NJCCC)

The New Jersey Clean Communities Council, Inc. (NJCCC) is the 501c3 nonprofit that works closely with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the New Jersey Department of Treasury to administer the Clean Communities program. The NJCCC is responsible for developing and implementing a statewide public information and education program for [P.L. 2020, c.117](https://www.njclean.org/), including limited distribution of free reusable bags. To learn more, visit: <https://www.njclean.org/> and <https://www.BagUpNJ.com/>.

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## NJEDA Programs Help Businesses Recover and Build Resilience

By: Tim Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer, New Jersey Economic Development Authority

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

foundation for recovery. To date, the Authority has approved over 92,000 awards totaling nearly \$667 million worth of COVID-19 relief through a combination of grants, low-interest loans, financing guarantees, and free business consulting. In Phases 2 through 4 of the Small Business Emergency Grant Program, 23,961 minority-owned businesses were approved for over \$187 million in grants and 23,321 woman-owned businesses were approved for more than \$180 million in grants.

Helping small businesses weather the impact of COVID-19 and supporting them as they recover from the pandemic have been among Governor Phil Murphy’s top priorities for the past 21 months. Guided by the principles of inclusion, intentionality, and sustainability, the Murphy Administration has taken a whole-of-government approach to ensuring that small businesses have the resources necessary to survive and thrive as the Garden State works towards an equitable recovery from the pandemic.

Since March of 2020, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) has played a central role in supporting communities across the state as they face the challenges associated with the pandemic and lay the

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## NJEDA Programs Help Businesses Recover and Build Resilience (Continued)

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Perhaps the most innovative program to come out the pandemic is Sustain and Serve NJ, which grew from a \$2 million pilot program designed to support New Jersey's restaurant industry into a \$45 million initiative on track to support the purchase of 4.5 million nutritious meals from over 400 restaurants in all 21 counties. The meals are purchased, then distributed for free to residents throughout the state. To ensure the program benefits New Jersey's small restaurant businesses, participating establishments must have 50 or fewer employees.

Governor Murphy has described this extraordinarily impactful program as a "grand slam" for the benefits it brings to restaurants, community-focused organizations, and New Jerseyans struggling to put food on the table during these challenging times. Entities such as Coalition for Food and Health Equity in Jersey City, Newark Working Kitchens, and the Rescue Mission of Trenton are leveraging program funding to reach the most vulnerable residents within their neighborhoods. Hightstown-based Soup Kitchen 411 works with partners all over the state, including organizations in the cities of Bayonne, Bloomfield, Camden, Elizabeth, Hoboken, Jersey City, New Brunswick, Newark, Paterson, Perth Amboy, Plainfield, Roselle, and Trenton to ensure that meals are distributed to residents in those cities and others throughout the state.

The NJEDA's support for small businesses in the state has not been limited to financial relief programs. The Authority also provided funding to create the E-Commerce Technical Assistance program to help businesses operate safely during COVID-19. In July of 2020, the Authority engaged the services of [Hudson Integrated](#), [Positive Solutions](#), and [Suasion Communications Group](#) to help businesses that normally rely on foot traffic and in-person transactions identify and implement the website and ecommerce capabilities they need to stay in business while complying with health guidelines and changing customer preferences. Through support from this program, more than 60 New Jersey businesses have pivoted to expand their online capabilities, helping them continue to serve their customers.

Over the past 21 months, the NJEDA has stood up numerous forward-looking programs to ensure that the economic recovery occurs in a fair and equitable manner while bolstering New Jersey's high-growth and high-growth sectors. The passage and signing of the New Jersey Economic Recovery Act of 2020 (ERA) in January 2021 was an important step in restarting the New Jersey economy in a stronger, fairer, and more equitable way. The programs the NJEDA is developing under the ERA represent a new approach to economic development that will create jobs, support bustling Main Streets, revitalize abandoned and contaminated properties, bring healthy grocery stores to food deserts, and boost New Jersey's innovation ecosystem.

Some programs created under the Main Street Recovery Program, established under ERA, are designed to assist growing small businesses. This includes the recently-launched [Small Business Lease Grant](#), which offers reimbursement of a percentage of annual lease payments to for-profit businesses and non-profit organizations in eligible areas that plan to lease between 250 and 10,000 square feet of new or additional market-rate, first-floor office, industrial or retail space for a minimum five-year term. A sister program, the [Small Business Improvement Grant](#), will offer reimbursement for costs associated with making building improvements or purchasing new furniture, fixtures and equipment when it launches in 2022. The NJEDA will also be launching the [Main Street Micro Business Loan](#), which will provide working capital financing of up to \$50,000 to eligible New Jersey micro-businesses with ten or fewer full time employees and no greater than \$1.5 million in annual revenues.

A pre-COVID program that continued to help businesses thrive during the pandemic is the [Small Business Bonding Readiness Assistance Program](#). It was launched in 2018 by the NJEDA and the African American Chamber of Commerce to help prepare small, minority, and women-owned business owners to obtain bonds, a crucial step in competing for state and federal government contracts. To date, approximately 125 graduates have qualified for nearly \$40 million in surety bonding. Separately, the NJEDA has also hosted virtual workshops designed to help small businesses, startups, and nonprofits learn how to properly navigate, and benefit from, the numerous programs and services offered by State entities.

As we look toward a post-COVID landscape, Governor Murphy remains committed to prioritizing the creation of opportunities for small businesses in sectors that will drive significant growth in jobs and investment. Many of the programs developed to bolster these sectors include provisions designed to foster equitable access to opportunities.

One vital industry is offshore wind, which the governor has hailed as a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity for New Jersey's economy. The [New Jersey Wind Port](#) will bring billions of dollars in economic activity and thousands of jobs to New Jersey. The NJEDA is committed to ensuring equitable access to the opportunities this project creates. The Authority launched a Local Engagement and Diversity Committee to provide guidance for meeting the project's diversity and inclusion goals and increasing opportunities in the offshore wind industry for historically marginalized populations. The NJEDA is also working with Port Construction Manager AECOM-Tishman to ensure at least 25 percent of subcontractors for the port construction are small businesses, at least 15 percent are women-, minority-, or veteran-owned, and at least three percent are service-disabled veteran-owned. NJEDA has also set diversity worker goals for the project at 18 percent minority workers and 6.9 percent women. The NJEDA is also leading the Governor's Wind Institute and other efforts to create a strong workforce development pipeline and innovation hub in New Jersey to prepare workers from the state and Northeast region for jobs in the offshore wind industry. Earlier this year, the NJEDA selected Rowan College of South Jersey to establish an offshore wind turbine technician training program and Atlantic Cape Community College to establish an industry-recognized Global Wind Organization safety training program and facility to prepare New Jersey workers for jobs in the state's growing offshore wind industry.

Lastly, furthering Governor Murphy's vision for a fairer, greener economy, the NJEDA will launch a new Brownfields Impact Fund later this winter. The Fund will provide grants and low-interest loans to public sector and non-profit organizations, as well as low-interest loans to for-profit organizations, to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites throughout the state.

New Jersey's COVID-19 relief efforts are among the most comprehensive in the country. Looking ahead, the NJEDA is confident that the data will show New Jersey's recovery programs are similarly, if not even more, effective at achieving the stronger, fairer recovery New Jersey needs and creating long-term, equitable prosperity in the state.

# Risk Management in the CannaBusiness Industry

By: T. Missy Balmir, President, CannaCoverage Insurance & Consulting Services

As the legal cannabis industry continues gaining momentum as one of the fastest-growing markets in the US, medical marijuana, cannabinoids, cannabis products, retail dispensaries, and other canna-businesses face particular challenges with their new position in the marketplace. So are the Mayors of urban cities facing increased public health and safety issues requiring risk mitigation. Whether a Canna-Business owner is in the state application process or looking to obtain insurance coverage, the choice of the professional hired will directly correlate to the best outcome, critical to the success and sustainability of that business and the community in which that business exists.

The Cannabis Regulatory Commission issues licenses for medicinal and recreational CannaBusiness operations in New Jersey. With the anticipation of the State receiving endless applications starting on December 15 for cannabis growers, processors, and testing labs and again, on March 15, 2022, for dispensaries. In just a few years, cannabis trading has moved from an underground market to a booming legal business. Medical marijuana is now legal in 37 states and the District of Columbia, and Adult-use marijuana is legal in 19 states and the District of Columbia. Therefore, cannabis and cannabinoid producers and distributors have quickly grown and need professional financial, legal, and insurance services. Claims and lawsuits against cannabis businesses ranging from inadequate warning labels, the presence of pesticide residues in products to unsafe handling practices during the manufacturing process are cropping up more and more.

The House and the Senate have been slow to catch up with public opinion of cannabis approval, leaving states to craft legalization and regulations with no federal guidance. The insurance industry has been wary of covering cannabis-related industries; despite the growing interest in the sector. Very few have the expertise and relationships in this highly specialized market and stand ready to serve this emerging market. As a result, the CannaBusiness industry is grossly underinsured, creating risks and challenges for business owners, property owners, venture capitalists, and the community in which that business exists.

As the cannabis sector and insurers examine the risks inherent in cannabis production and distribution, questions arise on everything from general liability to product liability, property, crop coverage, to director's and officer's liability insurance. In addition, the rise of cannabis as an alternative pain medication will have significant implications for the workers' compensation sector.

Whether it's a slip & fall claim at medical marijuana or recreational cannabis dispensary, a product liability claims from consumption of cannabinoid and other products produced by a manufacturer and sold at a dispensary, where both organizations are liable; or property damage or loss from fire or theft. Customized lines of insurance coverage will transfer the risk of loss to another entity to help the CannaBusiness recover from any unexpected losses.

## “Do I really need insurance to protect my CannaBusiness?”

"Do I really need insurance to protect my CannaBusiness? What are the advantages of having insurance? Is it worth it to pay for insurance?" Clients often ask these questions during a consultation, and we follow up with a question to their question. Suppose something happened to your crop, dispensary, or products such as crop disease, fire, theft. Is your business financially fit to absorb the financial loss or be self-insured without going out of business or financially stressed? The answer is pretty consistent, "No!"

## Insurance Coverage & Risk Management Are Not Equal

Insurance coverage transfers risks away from the business owner to the insurance carrier to limit the financial impact to the CannaBusiness. Risk Management is a culture with tools and knowledge of proactive risk prevention measures with the implementation of programs with best practices in some of the following areas to **increase the sustainability of the business and the neighborhoods they occupy**:

- CannaBusiness Feasibility Study**
- CannaBusiness Risk Assessment of Operations**
- Cannabis Occupational Safety and Health**
- Cannabis Public Safety and Health**
- Cannabis Product Safety**
- Cannabis Disaster Preparation and Readiness**
- Cannabis Energy Efficiency**
- Cannabis Green Infrastructure**
- Cannabis Social Justice**
- Cannabis Talent Optimization**
- Cannabis Compliance**
- Cannabis Finance and Banking**
- Medical Cannabis**

*Customized consulting with business solutions designed to protect businesses from failure, increase revenue to the municipality; maintain public safety and health; provide social justice in action; to impact and uplift the community and the environment.*

For additional information on Cannabusiness Consulting and Risk Management practices of Cannabusinesses in your community:

<https://www.cannacoverage.net>

[m.balmir@cannacoverage.net](mailto:m.balmir@cannacoverage.net)

The CRC has established the following information and resource guides for municipalities and potential cannabis business owners:

- CRC Recreational Cannabis Statewide Information Webinar: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/resources/webinars/index.shtml>
- FAQs for Municipalities: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/resources/faqs/municipalities/>
- FAQs for Cannabis Businesses: <https://www.nj.gov/cannabis/businesses/#faqs>
- Additional FAQs: <https://www.nj.gov/ca>

# Eviction Protection for Nonpayment of Rent During the Pandemic Is Still Available: NJ Residents Must Complete Income Self-Certification to Be Eligible for Protection

By: Janel Winter, Director of the Division of Housing and Community Resources  
New Jersey Department of Community Affairs

Through the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Eviction Prevention Program, the State of New Jersey has been financially assisting households that experienced economic hardships during the pandemic and accumulated outstanding rent. In addition to providing financial help through the rental assistance programs, the State, in August 2021, also mandated critical eviction protections for renter households.

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is reminding residents that eviction protection is still available, but they need to act today. To be protected from eviction due to nonpayment of rent during the pandemic, households must self-certify for these protections by completing a household income self-certification form online at [covid19.nj.gov/renter](https://covid19.nj.gov/renter). Those without access to a computer may call 609-490-4550 for assistance.

There is no deadline by when to complete the self-certification, but DCA is urging renters to fill out the form as soon as possible.

These protections are available for renters at different household-income levels. The following protected income levels under the law are defined as a percentage of the median income of a household of similar size in the same county where the applicant resides:

- Middle Income – between 80% and 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI)
- Moderate-, Low- or Very-Low Income – below 80% AMI

## What Is Covered Under the Protections?

### Households Who Qualify as Middle Income

Protection from eviction for nonpayment of rent from March 1, 2020, through August 31, 2021;

Protection from eviction for habitual late payment of rent from March 1, 2020, through August 31, 2021; and

Protection from eviction for failure to pay a rent increase that accrued from March 1, 2020, through August 31, 2021.

### Households Who Qualify as Moderate-, Low-, or Very Low-Income

Protection from eviction for nonpayment of rent from March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021;

Protection from eviction for habitual late payment of rent from March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021; and

Protection from eviction for failure to pay a rent increase that accrued from March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021.

In order to take advantage of the eviction protections, it is critical that the self-certification form is completed.

While the renter is protected from eviction, a landlord may pursue an action for a money judgment (not an eviction) for any rent due. This is why eligible households with rental arrears or experiencing difficulty paying rent should apply for rental assistance. The application period for the State's COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program and Eviction Prevention Program is currently closed. However, local (county and municipal) assistance may still be available and eligible households may apply for assistance through more than one program. The complete list of local rental assistance programs can be accessed here: <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/mortgage-and-housing-assistance/renter-protections/find-help-with-rent-and-utilities/>.

Additionally, renters can submit a pre-application to be considered for rental assistance should DCA receive additional funding in the future. People can go to <https://www.nj.gov/dca/cverap2.shtml> for more information.

## Court-Involved Renter Households Are Also Protected

The online self-certification tool also allows the form to be sent directly to the courts if a tenant has a docket number for an eviction case that has been filed. If there is a pending eviction action for unpaid rent accrued from March 1, 2020 through August 31, 2021 for middle-income households or from March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2021 for moderate, low, or very low-income households, the docket number should be included on the form and a selection made to send it directly to the court. The court will notify tenants when the form has been processed and if the case is dismissed. Read here for more details and frequently asked questions about the renter protections and the required household income certification form: [Renter Self-Certification Process and FAQs | FAQ \(nj.gov\)](#)

If there is no pending eviction action at the time the form is completed, it will be retained in the State's database. Should an eviction action be filed for rent accrued between March 1, 2020, and August 31, 2021 for a middle-income household, the court will inform the tenant when the self-certification form has been processed and if the case has been dismissed. Similarly, in the case of a tenant who certifies that they: (1) reside in a very low-, low-, or moderate-income household; (2) have suffered economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and (3) have applied for rental assistance for which they are eligible for rent accrued between March 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, the self-certification form will be filed with the court at that time. The court will alert the tenant when the form has been processed and if the case has been dismissed.

## Help DCA Spread the Word

In October, DCA sent out information in English and Spanish through U.S. mail to approximately 60,000 addresses listed in the data the New Jersey Administrative Office of the Courts provided for tenants with pending eviction filings. The information included the link to the

# Eviction Protection for Nonpayment of Rent During the Pandemic Is Still Available: NJ Residents Must Complete Income Self-Certification to Be Eligible for Protection (Continued)

emergency rental assistance application portal and a phone number. In addition, DCA sent texts and emails to those tenants with phone numbers and email addresses on file. DCA also sent information to landlords about the self-certification form and eviction protection to be posted in multi-family apartment buildings, as well as information to municipal clerks to share with landlords in their jurisdictions.

Additionally, DCA is working with six community-based organizations to carry out comprehensive and targeted statewide public outreach to ensure that eligible New Jersey households are knowledgeable about these protections and take action to protect themselves from eviction. The organizations – UCC (United Community Corp), Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ), NJ Citizen Action, La Casa, Community Affairs and Resource Center (CARC), and Garden State Home (GSH) – are using a number of methods, including targeted outreach to vulnerable populations considered least likely to apply for assistance such as extremely low-income, non-English speaking, and disabled households; intentional outreach to landlords; and partnering with local community groups and agencies connected to eligible households. Other outreach methods include door-to-door/peer-to-peer direct canvassing; providing assistance with income self-certifications and rental assistance and utility assistance applications via a tablet or smartphone; print and digital media distribution; live in-person events and events on social media; and coordinated outreach with local community groups, faith communities, libraries, community centers, NJ Head Start programs, Family Success Centers, and local businesses in order to saturate constituency markets with information and assistance.

People in need of assistance might also try the following resources:

Help with utility arrears and assistance paying utility bills: [DCAid Services](#) · [Custom Portal \(nj.gov\)](#)

Other NJ assistance: <https://dcaid.dca.nj.gov/en-US/>

Local governments with rental assistance programs: [Find Rental Assistance Programs in Your Area | Consumer Financial Protection Bureau \(consumerfinance.gov\)](#)

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## Career Opportunities at the NJ Department of Environmental Protection

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New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

# A diversity of Career Opportunities at DEP

Please join us for exciting opportunities in environmental science and other careers.

**Career Opportunities:** Engineering, Science and Research, Geography, Computer Technology, Finance, Interpretive Specialist, Park Police Officers, Human Resources and much more...

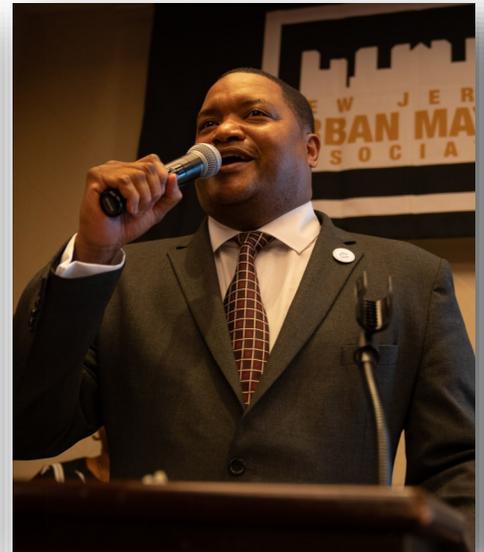
**Career Areas:** Natural and Historic Resources, Land Use Management, Site Remediation and Waste Management, Solid and Hazardous Waste Management, Enforcement, Air Quality, Energy and Sustainability, Water Resource Management, Public Affairs and Communications, etc.



For more information contact:  
Marvin B. Ross, Chief Diversity Officer  
New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach  
401 East State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625  
Email: [marvin.ross@dep.nj.gov](mailto:marvin.ross@dep.nj.gov)

Email us your  
resumes NOW!

# The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association at the 106th New Jersey League of Municipalities Conference









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106th NJ League of Municipalities Conference*



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*The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association  
wishes you a happy holiday season and a healthy  
and prosperous New Year!*





# KEAN



*Climb Higher at Little or No Cost to You*

# KEAN TUITION PROMISE



Kean University President  
Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D.

*“The new Kean Tuition Promise program promotes equity and expands access to Kean University and a world-class education for students across New Jersey. It makes it possible for deserving students to experience the life-changing effect of a college degree.”*

The Kean Tuition Promise program covers up to **full tuition and fees** for eligible students to attend Kean University and fulfill their dream of earning a college degree. The scholarship and grant package is awarded for **four years of study** for those who qualify. Unlike loans, the program provides money for your college education that **does not need to be repaid**. Limited packages are available.

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the Kean Tuition Promise program, you must meet the following criteria:

• <b>GPA</b>	High school GPA of 3.2 or higher
• <b>Income</b>	Family adjusted gross income of up to \$65K annually (For dependent students, this includes your parents' income.)
• <b>Citizenship</b>	U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen
• <b>Residency</b>	New Jersey resident for at least one year before the first day of class
• <b>Class level</b>	College freshman starting full time in the Fall 2022 semester

### NOTE:

Students must complete the FAFSA, and may also qualify for the Federal Work-Study Program that provides part-time jobs to help pay education expenses. Housing costs are additional.

## NEXT STEPS

Let Kean review your eligibility today. APPLY NOW for admission and financial aid.

### STEP 1

#### Apply to Kean

as a freshman student

GO TO

[kean.edu/apply-now](https://kean.edu/apply-now)

Apply now using the priority deadline of **March 1**.

The standard application deadline is **June 1** and may be extended on a limited basis.

Please use the code: KEANPROMISE to waive the \$75 application fee.

#### CONTACT US

admissions assistance:  
admitme@kean.edu  
(908) 737-7100

### STEP 2

#### File the FAFSA form and NJ TAG applications

to receive an estimated award letter

GO TO

[studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov)

File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. The FAFSA determines your eligibility for **all forms** of financial aid.

Kean school code: 002622

Applicants with completed FAFSAs will be reviewed for eligibility into this program.

File the New Jersey TAG (Tuition Aid Grant) application by **March 1**.

#### CONTACT US

financial aid assistance:  
finaid@kean.edu  
(908) 737-3190

### STEP 3

#### Enroll at Kean

for the upcoming fall semester

GO TO

[kean.edu/accepted](https://kean.edu/accepted)

After you receive your admission decision and estimated award letter, meet with your admissions counselor and submit your tuition deposit by **May 1**.

#### CONTACT US

enrollment assistance:  
enroll@kean.edu  
(908) 737-1000

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about the Kean Tuition Promise program, visit: [kean.edu/tuition-promise](https://kean.edu/tuition-promise)

## A Message from the Editor



Dear readers,

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the *Urban Mayors Press*. This publication was created to highlight the work of New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) members and to provide resourceful information to municipalities throughout our state.

*Ishiya A. Hayes is the editor of the Urban Mayors Press and the Associate Director/Senior Policy Analyst of the Urban Mayors Policy Center where she provides support through policy analysis and program coordination for the NJUMA.*

## NEW JERSEY URBAN MAYORS ASSOCIATION

To submit to an upcoming issue of the *Urban Mayors Press* or for more information on the NJUMA contact:

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## About the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association

The New Jersey Urban Mayors Association (NJUMA) is housed in the Urban Mayors Policy Center at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University. The Urban Mayors Policy Center coordinates all activities of the NJUMA and provides policy and legislative analysis.

Established in 1991, the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association is dedicated to working with state and federal lawmakers and officials to develop appropriate and effective public policy measures that benefit the state's urban centers and to help lawmakers understand how public policy affects New Jersey's municipalities.

NJUMA is an organization comprised of 32 New Jersey urban and rural municipalities. NJUMA serves its members through meetings and annual conferences which keep them informed on issues affecting their ability to provide adequate services to their residents.

NJUMA also assists its members in interpreting legislation and state policy and works with the Governor's Office to assist in defining an urban policy agenda. NJUMA uses its *7-Point Plan for Strengthening Cities, Families and Communities* as a guide for addressing the critical issues of its member cities. This plan is designed to aggressively address the areas of crime and public safety; education and positive youth development; environment and public health; family and community welfare; housing and economic development; tax reform and intergovernmental relations, and unfunded mandates.

NJUMA is a proactive organization that pursues opportunities from the government and the private sector to advance the interests of its members. We are consistently exploring opportunities which will strengthen our communities and ultimately the state of New Jersey.



## New Jersey Urban Mayors Association Member Municipalities

Asbury Park

Atlantic City

Bayonne

Bloomfield

Bridgeton

Camden

East Orange

Elizabeth

Hillside

Hoboken

Irvington

Jersey City

Kearny

Lakewood

Linden

Millville

Neptune Township

New Brunswick

Newark

North Bergen

Orange

Passaic

Paterson

Perth Amboy

Plainfield

Pleasantville

Roselle

Trenton

Vineland

Wildwood

Willingboro

Woodbridge



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