Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces New Funding to Combat Food Insecurity in New Jersey

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$20 million in CARES Act Funding Will Support Local Food Banks During Pandemic

HILLSIDE – Governor Phil Murphy today announced that he will direct money from the Coronavirus Relief Fund, established under the Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to support New Jersey food banks, which have been providing families with food assistance at unprecedented rates during the COVID-19 pandemic. The total CARES Act funding amount will be $20 million, with $10 million distributed before August 2020 and an additional $10 million available before December 2020.

“Food banks are a critical lifeline for New Jersey families, and now more than ever, they provide nutrition assistance to families and their children who have been struggling to access food during this pandemic,” **said Governor Murphy**. “This new federal funding will enable food banks to continue providing for those across our communities who most rely on their services.”

The $20 million in CARES Act funding will be distributed from the Department of Agriculture to the State’s six Emergency Feeding Organizations—Southern Regional, Food Bank of South Jersey, the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, Mercer Street Friends, Fulfill, and Norwescap—based on a “fair share” formula that uses these organizations’ service numbers.

The Governor also highlighted nearly $390 million in additional federal funding for food assistance, which will benefit thousands of families and children as New Jersey continues to grapple with this pandemic. Of the $390 million, the Department of Human Services and Department of Education will begin delivering $208 million in special food assistance benefits to more than 500,000 school children who would have received free or reduced-price school meals during the school year. Additionally, the Department of Human Services has delivered more than $180 million in new, added benefits from federal funding to provide individuals and families who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) food assistance and secured federal approval to make it easier to apply for and retain SNAP benefits.

“Hunger is a hidden crisis that has been made worse and become more visible by the economic consequences of the pandemic. It afflicts people in urban, rural and even suburban communities throughout the state, leaving the most vulnerable among us with the inability to meet the basic need of putting food on the table," **said Senate President Steve Sweeney.** "No one should have to live with the fear and insecurity of not knowing where their next meal will come from, especially families with children. Food banks are on the frontlines and their service is vital in this time of crisis. They deserve our unqualified support as we work together to close the gap of food insecurity and alleviate hunger.”

“It is great news that $20 million in Federal CARES act money will help fund our three major food distributors in New Jersey,” **said Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin**. “I thank Governor Murphy and my legislative colleagues for directing this funding to these food banks. Our top job as elected officials is to protect the most vulnerable and unfortunately, the COVID-19 health crisis has added to our vulnerable population which now includes families that are in need of assistance for the first time. The funding being announced today means fewer of our friends and neighbors will go to bed hungry. None of this would be possible without the efforts of New Jersey's Congressional delegation to assist individuals and families at the most basic levels."

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“Food banks fill a vital role in our Garden State economy and safety net, and have been met with exceptional demand

during this crisis. In my own district, Fulfill, the food bank of Monmouth and Ocean County, is doing incredible work to support families and households during their times of need, and it's vital that their efforts continue," **said Senator Vin Gopal**. "By dedicating this $20 million in funding, and $3 million to Fulfill, we're giving food banks a fighting chance as they work to support families that have lost jobs or income due to the pandemic. Thank you to everyone who made this funding possible, and especially Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin for championing this issue, and for his dedicated efforts to combat hunger in our Garden State."

"The coronavirus has created food insecurity for thousands of New Jersey residents," said Congressman Donald Payne, Jr. "Food banks are critical to the health and well-being of people who have lost jobs and income during this global pandemic. We need to provide more support to all our state and local food banks to help our residents survive this public health crisis."

"I join the Governor, the Legislature and the people of New Jersey in thanking the food banks and pantries across our state for the hard work and dedication they've shown over the past several months to ensure families across New Jersey maintain access to food as we fight COVID-19," **said Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson**. "As we know, the pandemic has created significant economic and health challenges, with many families suddenly faced with the very real worry about how they are going to get their next meal. As our colleagues in the food bank and pantry network have heroically met these immediate needs, we've been working at Human Services to provide additional funding to families through our food assistance program, NJ SNAP; creating a new program to get money to families of children who previously received free or reduced school lunch; and, working to make it easier to get individuals enrolled in NJ SNAP. Together, we will continue to fight hunger and help New Jersey families get the vital assistance they need."

"Food banks play an essential role in providing access to meals for those in need," **said Department of Agriculture Secretary Douglas Fisher**. "The pandemic has heightened the importance of these outlets across New Jersey by offering assistance to those who find themselves in uncertain economic circumstances."

"Proper nutrition is crucial to the growth and well-being of children," **said Kevin Dehmer, Interim Commissioner of Education**. "We made food security one of our highest priorities when schools closed throughout the state in the spring due to the global pandemic, and it continues to be a top priority of the Department of Education and our sister agencies."

"At a time when Fulfill, formerly The FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, is serving nearly 16,000 more meals per day as a result of a surge in unemployment at the Jersey Shore, we simply cannot keep up with the prolonged need for food with private donations alone," **said Kim Guadagno, President of Fulfill and former Lieutenant Governor Of New Jersey**. "Fulfill thanks Governor Murphy, Speaker Coughlin, Senator Gopal, and our other Legislators for their persistence in helping us get the message across to our leaders in Trenton."

"All sectors of government--from our local officials to state administrators--were active partners in the fight against hunger before COVID-19 and have remained as such as we've navigated this uncharted territory together," **said Carlos Rodriguez, President & CEO of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey.** "On behalf of the New Jersey Federation of Food Banks, I want to thank Governor Murphy, Speaker Coughlin, Senate President Sweeney, First Lady Tammy Murphy, and all of our government partners for their support, leadership, and compassion for those who are struggling. With so many in our state facing hunger for the first time in their lives during this crisis, this critical funding through the CARES Act will enable New Jersey's food banks and our local networks to serve more neighbors in need than ever before."

"The FBSJ is grateful for the support and acknowledgement recognizing the importance of our mission, along with our NJ food bank companions in serving so many individuals, families, children, and seniors during this unprecedented time of need," **said Fred C, Wasiak, President & CEO, Food Bank of South Jersey.**

Governor Phil Murphy

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