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## October 15, 2021

- I. State Issues
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**Municipal Clerks:** Please forward to your Mayor, Governing Body, and Department Heads.

To assist in providing guidance and information, we have created a [COVID-19 resource page](#). We will continue to update the page as we get pertinent information and include announcements in our Daily Updates.

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### I. State Issues

#### a. Governor's Climate Change Resiliency Strategy is Released

Earlier this week, Governor Phil Murphy's Interagency Council on Climate Resilience released the final version of the state's first [Climate Change Resiliency Strategy](#). The Climate Change Resilience Strategy outlines six state priorities to guide state and local government climate action and includes over 100 recommendations to strengthen the state against climate impacts, including sea-level rise, chronic flooding, rising temperatures, and more frequent and intense storm events.

The Strategy's six priorities are: 1) build resilient and healthy communities, 2) strengthen the resilience of New Jersey's ecosystems, 3) promote coordinated governance, 4) invest in information and increase public understanding, 5) expand resilience funding and financing and, 6) establish a coastal resilience plan. The priorities and strategies outlined in the Climate Change Resilience Strategy will be likely to be relied on by legislators as they craft future legislation dealing with land use and environmental issues.

**Contact:** Frank Marshall, Esq., Associate General Counsel, [fmarshall@njlm.org](mailto:fmarshall@njlm.org), 609-695-

3481, x137.

### **b. NJDCA Notifies Households that Utility Relief is Available**

On Tuesday, October 12, the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) mailed letters to approximately 350,000 households with overdue natural gas and electric bills to notify them that they are eligible for assistance to pay for their utilities. The letters contain a QR code that households can scan with their smartphones to access the State's website to apply for the utility bill assistance program. All households that receive a letter will have one month to apply for the assistance. For more information, [please visit the New Jersey Utility Assistance Program website](#).

**Contact:** Andrew LaFevre, Legislative Analyst, [alafevre@njlm.org](mailto:alafevre@njlm.org), 609-695-3481, x116.

### **c. CY 2022 Municipal Budget Cap Information**

The Division of Local Government Services (DLGS) has issued [Local Finance Notice 2021-19](#) regarding the CY 2022 Municipal and County Budget and Cap Information.

There are two caps that limit local budgets. One is the 1977 budget cap law, which caps appropriations increases, and the other is the 2010 levy cap law, which caps levy increases. The 1977 budget cap law requires the DLGS to promulgate the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). The COLA for the CY 2022 budget is 2.5%. The governing body may pass a COLA ordinance, increasing the appropriation cap base to 3.5%. Cap banked balances from 2020 and 2021 are available for use in 2022.

In addition, both the 1977 and 2010 cap laws include a cap exception for Group Health Insurance. The State Health Benefits increase for CY 2022 is 5%. Therefore, the CY 2022 Group Health Insurance exemption under the 1997 cap is 1% and under the 2010 levy cap is 3%.

**Contact:** Lori Buckelew, Assistant Executive Director, [lbuckelew@njlm.org](mailto:lbuckelew@njlm.org), 609-695-3481, x112.

### **d. Executive Order Requiring State ARP Reporting**

Last week Governor Murphy signed [Executive Order 267](#) (EO 267) requiring municipalities and counties to submit to the Division of Local Government Services copies of all reports filed with the US Treasury as part of the American Rescue Plan COVID-19 State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. The Executive Order immediately took effect on October 8, 2021. Please see the League's [recent blog post](#) for more information on EO 267.

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## **II. Federal Issues**

### **a. Federal Update**

## **Debt Limit Increase**

The House of Representatives passed a debt ceiling increase of \$840 billion that the Senate passed last week. On Thursday President Joe Biden signed the measure. This issue will return in December, along with the need for Congress to pass spending bills to fund the government.

## **Build Back Better Agenda & Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**

The House, Senate and White House are still negotiating on both the topline number and parameters in the Build Back Better package that all parties can agree upon.

Assuming an agreement on the Build Back Better package occurs, there will be a House vote on the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that passed the Senate last summer.

If that does not happen, it is unclear what happens next. We will continue to keep you posted on the negotiations and process.

**Contact:** Paul Penna, Legislative Analyst, [ppenna@njlm.org](mailto:ppenna@njlm.org), 609 695-3481, x110.

## **b. FEMA Announces Major Disaster Declaration for Cape May County**

Last week, [Governor Phil Murphy announced](#) that FEMA has approved a Major Disaster Declaration in Cape May County for Public Assistance. The declaration will allow government agencies and certain non-profits in the county to apply to FEMA's Public Assistance program for reimbursement of costs to respond to and recover from Tropical Storm Ida.

Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

Please use [the state portal](#) to report Ida-related damage and keep documentation, photos, and receipts. This should expedite reimbursement. As a reminder, federal funding is available on a cost-sharing basis for hazard mitigation measures statewide, including counties that do not meet the major disaster declaration threshold.

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## **III. COVID-19 Weekly Update**

Earlier this week, Governor Phil Murphy announced that 75% of all eligible residents are now vaccinated, with 84% receiving at least one dose. In addition, the Governor and Human Services Acting Commissioner, Sarah Adelman, announced plans to invest more than \$700 million to help parents pay for child care, provide bonus pay to child care workers, and distribute grants and increase support to child care providers.

### **COVID Data for Friday, October 15, 2021:**

- 1,577 new positive cases for a total of 1,024,061 confirmed cases

- 19 new confirmed deaths for a total of 24,889 confirmed deaths
- The rate of transmission is at 0.94
- 27 new outbreaks are impacting 17 staff and 125 students. This brings the total statewide number of outbreaks directly related to in-school activity since mid-August to 96 across 84 districts, impacting a total of 444 students and 77 staff members.
- 12,023,983 vaccine doses have been administered, including 6,709,810 who have received at least one dose and 5,765,956 who are fully vaccinated. 58% are Pfizer, 38% Moderna, and 4% J&J. In addition, 239,252 have received an additional dose of Pfizer and 57,255 have received an additional dose of Moderna.

## **Vaccine Information**

Boosters are available for all Pfizer recipients who completed their initial two-shot course at least six months ago and who are ages 65 and over, individuals ages 18 and older who have underlying medical conditions which may make them more susceptible to the virus, or whose employment situation may also put them at higher risk, including first responders and healthcare workers, educators and daycare employees, correctional facility workers, those whose jobs are along with our public transit system, food and agricultural workers including grocery store employees, manufacturing workers, and correction workers.

As a reminder, the Department of Health is providing access to individuals' COVID vaccination records through [NJ Docket, a secure and free smartphone app](#), which is CDC-approved.

Homebound residents who have not yet connected with their local health department or a home health agency, and who need an in-home vaccination should visit [www.covid19.nj.gov/homeboundvax](http://www.covid19.nj.gov/homeboundvax) or contact the call center at 855-568-0545.

To find a vaccine site, visit [www.covid19.nj.gov/vaccine](http://www.covid19.nj.gov/vaccine).

## **Mental Health Resources**

As a reminder, the Department of Children and Families has put together a new page on their COVID information hub with a wealth of mental health support resources for youth, for parents, and for educators. This all can be found at that website, [www.covid19.nj.gov/youthhelp](http://www.covid19.nj.gov/youthhelp).

## **Child Care Investments**

The state plans to invest more than \$700 million in new funding to support parents who need additional assistance to pay for childcare, provide recruitment and retention bonus payments to childcare workers, and distribute additional grants to support childcare providers. The initiative relies mainly on American Rescue Plan Act funding. The new initiative focuses on three key areas: supporting children and families by reducing childcare costs; higher wages and more training for childcare workers; and grants for childcare providers for their ongoing operations and incentives to invest in quality and expand after hours care.

The plan will continue to reduce the direct cost of childcare for families participating in

the assistance program to December 2023 by providing additional payments up to \$300 for full-time care or \$150 for part-time care, per eligible child, per month in addition to the child care assistance rate by the state. The co-payment in the state's child care subsidy will be waived. Implement financial incentives to increase the number of child care providers that offer non-traditional evening and weekend hours.

The plan will also help recruit new childcare employees and retain current childcare staff by providing a \$1,000 bonus payment in December and again next summer. These bonuses will be partially funded from the Childcare Revitalization Fund signed into law by Governor Murphy, which provides \$30 million to Human Services for childcare workforce assistance.

The plan will also provide for two new rounds of pandemic stabilization grants to help stabilize and sustain child care providers' operations. For licensed childcare centers, grant availability will range from \$20,000 to \$80,000 in the first round, depending on the number of children served. The grants will be \$2,000 for in-home family child care providers. Providers can use these dollars to support their operating expenses such as wages and benefits, rent and utilities, and facilities improvements and maintenance. Grants will be made available for summer youth camp providers again this coming summer in 2022 and again in 2023 to help cover COVID-related costs and assist families with paying for summer camp.

Residents can visit [www.childcarenj.gov](http://www.childcarenj.gov) to determine if they may be eligible for assistance affording childcare.

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