

Grantee News

Policy Victories:

- Due to advocacy by the Housing and Community Development Network of NJ (HCDNNJ) and partners, S2350 and S2351 were signed into law. The bills provide fee exemptions for homeless individuals to obtain key forms of identification often needed to receive essential social services. Read more [here](#).
- As a result of litigation by ACLU-NJ and Drug Policy Alliance (DPA), the State Council on Local Mandates upheld New Jersey's bail reform law against a challenge brought by an association of counties claiming lawmakers failed to properly fund the reform law. The bail reform bill shifted New Jersey from a cash bail system to a risk assessment based system. Read more [here](#).
- Due to advocacy by HCDNNJ, Advocates for Children of NJ (ACNJ), Isles, and partners, S1830 was signed into law, requiring the New Jersey Department of Health to adopt regulations to reflect the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for identification of children with elevated blood levels. The CDC now requires additional testing for children found to have more than 5 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood, and it may be lowered further to 3.5 µg/dL; NJ's levels had been 10 µg/dL. Read more [here](#).
- Thanks to long-standing efforts by HCDNNJ and partners, Governor Christie signed A333 into law. The legislation provides short-term relief for Hurricane Sandy Victims, allowing them to qualify for forbearance on their mortgage payments to prevent foreclosure. Read more [here](#).
- Due to advocacy by NJ Alliance for Immigrant Justice (NJAIJ), American Friends Service Committee, and partners, Jersey City passed Fair and Welcoming City policies through both a city council resolution and a mayoral executive order. Soon after Plainfield City Council passed a Fair and Welcoming City resolution due to efforts by Wind of the Spirit, NJ Working Families, and partners. While several municipalities have affirmed their status as sanctuary cities, these policies are notably comprehensive and most closely resemble NJAIJ's model policy. Read more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- Thanks to litigation brought by Fair Share Housing Center, the New Jersey Supreme Court unanimously ruled that towns are responsible for meeting housing needs which accumulated during the 16-year "gap period" (1999-2015) when the state's fair housing laws were not fulfilled by the State's Council on Affordable Housing. Read more [here](#).
- Due to litigation by ACLU-NJ, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that juveniles cannot be sentenced to de facto life sentences without the possibility of parole without carefully considering the their youth played in their crimes. The ruling expands application of U.S. special standards regarding juvenile offenders facing life without parole, adopted by the Supreme Court

in 2012, to young offenders who face very long sentences as well. The Court encouraged the legislature to act to develop a formal mechanism to implement the decision. Read more [here](#).

Policy Setbacks:

- Despite long-standing efforts by Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and partners, the Pinelands Commission voted to permit the South Jersey Gas pipeline project with a vote of 9-5 and one abstention. This decision comes after a court ruled that the Pinelands Commission's Executive Director did not have the authority to determine that the project complied with the agency's Comprehensive Management Plan, and remanded the matter back to the full Pinelands Commission for review. Read more [here](#).

Policy Updates:

- The New Jersey Supreme Court declined to hear Governor Christie's motion to reopen the *Abbott vs Burke* court case; the governor wanted the Court to revisit its previous rulings on school funding. The decision has been applauded by advocates such as Education Law Center and Save Our Schools NJ (SOSNJ) that warn against Governor Christie's "fairness formula." Furthermore, Governor Christie's budget address did not include the "fairness formula," instead challenging NJ lawmakers to propose a new school funding formula. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).
- As a result of efforts by HCDNNJ A-815/S-1088 will go on to the Assembly for a vote. The bill requires county emergency management coordinators to establish a Code Blue Program to shelter homeless people during severe weather events. Read more [here](#).
- In line with efforts by SOSNJ, the NJ Board of Education rejected part of Governor Christie's proposal that would have allowed charter schools to adopt less stringent teacher certification standards than public schools. The rest of the proposal was approved but must still go through a lengthy adoption process. Read more [here](#).
- Due to advocacy by HCDNNJ, A3585 and A3611, which would enhance inspections of homes as a lead poisoning prevention measure, advanced to the Assembly. A3585 would allow municipalities to conduct home inspections at least once every five years and A3611 would ensure that rentals are being inspected for lead before a new tenant moves in. Read more [here](#).
- As a result of long-standing advocacy by DPA and ACLU-NJ the Legislature passed A2182/S895 and the bill now awaits approval from Governor Christie. The bill allows for the release of low-risk individuals from prison after they have served their basic sentence, provided they commit no serious disciplinary infractions while incarcerated and participate in rehabilitation programs. Read more [here](#).
- Due to long-standing advocacy by DPA, and Anti-Poverty Network A3677/S677 is up for a vote to the full Assembly. The bill would require racial and ethnic impact statements for certain bills and regulations affecting sentencing in an effort to reduce NJ's status as the state with the worst racial disparities in its incarcerated population in the country. Read more [here](#).
- Due to advocacy by Advocates for Children of NJ, chronic absenteeism is proposed to be one of the key indicators to measure in NJ's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan. The proposal draft will receive public comment and a final draft is due April 2017. Read more [here](#).

Policy Reports:

- Pinelands Preservation Alliance released its annual *State of the Pinelands* report, highlighting the increased threats to the Pinelands region, stalled environmental policy initiatives to protect the Pinelands, and development projects that have quickly advanced. Read the full report [here](#).
- The Century Foundation and Center for Diversity and Equality in Education co-published *Remediating School Segregation: How New Jersey's Morris School District Chose to make Diversity Work*. The report combines historical context, quantitative analysis and qualitative interviews and focus groups to highlight best practices of the Morris school district. Read more [here](#).
- New Jersey Policy Perspective published *Repealing the Affordable Care Act Would Devastate New Jersey*, analyzing the impacts for New Jersey. The report found that 1.1 million NJ residents would lose benefits, \$4.2 billion in federal funding would be lost each year, 86,000 jobs would be lost, and 777 people would die due to lost insurance. It also provides county specific statistics with infographics. Read more [here](#).
- New Jersey Policy Perspective also published its *Blueprint for Economic Justice and Shared Prosperity*, which details how the state can protect and invest in its assets, including education and transportation, and build a vibrant and equitable economy. Read more [here](#).

Events

- March 17—[Everyone is Welcome Here: Addressing Immigration Issues Facing Our Communities](#)
- March 16—[NJAIJ Train the Trainers- Know Your Rights \(Middlesex County\)](#)
- March 18— [NJAIJ Train the Trainers- Know Your Rights \(Hudson County\)](#)
- March 21—[Pre-K Our Way Community Communication Meetings \(South/Central Jersey\)](#)
- March 22—[Anti-Poverty Network General Meeting](#)
- March 23—[Pre-K Our Way Community Communication Meetings \(North Central Jersey\)](#)
- March 24—[NJ Spotlight Roundtable: ACA Repeal and Replace: New Jersey's Response](#)
- March 28—[Addressing Cumulative Impacts of Pollution Through Local Land Use Policy Tools](#)

Job Announcements

- American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey—[Public Policy Director](#)
- Housing and Community Development Network of NJ—[Financial & Office Administrator](#)
- NJ Institute for Social Justice—[Law and Policy Director](#)
- NJ Institute for Social Justice—[The Hon. Debevoise Social Justice Legal Advocacy Fellowship](#)

Please send policy news and updates, job announcements, and staff updates to Sofia Flores at sflores@fundfornj.org or you can Tweet to @FundforNJ.