

Jobs4Jersey:

JOSH GOTTHEIMER'S PLAN TO BRING BUSINESSES AND JOBS BACK TO NEW JERSEY

I. ATTRACTING MORE JOBS AND BUSINESS TO NEW JERSEY

My dad was a small business owner in New Jersey. He started his company in our basement and watching him build it from the ground up taught me the value of hard work and perseverance. But while he was able to carve out his own path, too many hardworking people today lack access to the tools, training, and support they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving economy. We are not attracting enough people or businesses to our state because it's too unaffordable and difficult to do business. We're not creating enough jobs, and our costs and taxes are too high. As a result, we've lost more than a third of our publicly traded companies in the past decade.

As Governor, I will cut taxes to stimulate the economy, attract businesses, and bring more jobs to the hardworking people of New Jersey. I've laid these steps out already in my "Tax Cut Plan" – **the only detailed, expert-backed, fully-paid-for plan by any candidate to cut taxes and lower costs.** Specifically, my plan does the following to bolster the economy in New Jersey:

- Offer a "New Job" tax credit to companies (large or small) explicitly for creating new jobs in our state. If you move new jobs to New Jersey, you will get a tax credit of \$5,000 per new job created.
- Incentivize people to move to Jersey by being "property tax neutral" for five years, allowing households to keep the same property tax rate from their previous residence.
- Slash our highest-in-the-nation property taxes by nearly 15 percent and give renters an annual rebate.

Those are by far the most important things we can do to get companies and jobs to move to our state and create a better economy for all.

But there are further actions I will take as Governor to create Jobs for Jersey – and the rest of this plan tells you how I'll:

- Grow and support New Jersey's main industries (Section II)
- Make the investments we need in our people (Section III)
- Make the investments we need in our infrastructure (Section IV)

II. GROW AND SUPPORT NEW JERSEY'S MAIN INDUSTRIES

OUR CHALLENGE

New Jersey is home to world-class industries that are driving innovation and creating opportunities from life sciences and healthcare, to fintech, tech, and advanced agriculture. These sectors aren't just part of our economy — they are powering it:

- The tech sector contributes \$55.8 billion to our economy.
- More than 3,000 life sciences companies, including 13 of the world's top 20 research-based biopharmaceutical companies, have a headquarters or significant presence in the state.
- New Jersey has long been a financial powerhouse — home to Prudential, Verisk, and a thriving fintech sector that's helped drive our economy. Approximately 25% of the world's top 100 fintech companies have a presence in the state.
- Manufacturing has been one of New Jersey's fastest growing industries and an increasing share of New Jersey's overall economy, growing by 5.6 percent on average for many years. In 2023, manufacturing added \$67.5 billion to New Jersey's economy, accounting for 8.4% of the state's GDP.
- We're lucky to have a beautiful state—from the Jersey Shore to our lakes and forests. Tourism supports over 500,000 jobs in the state, and visitors directly spend nearly \$50 billion a year in New Jersey.
- Agriculture and food-related businesses comprise the third largest industry in New Jersey.

We have a strategic location, the best values, and a talented workforce – now we need an equally strategic business plan. We need to double down on what we do best: innovation and homegrown talent. That includes embracing emerging sectors like artificial intelligence and blockchain, and positioning New Jersey as a home for the next generation of technologies — not just to keep pace, but to lead.

But the punitive economic policies of the Trump Administration have the potential to weaken our economy. We need a fighter for Jersey, someone who isn't afraid to stand up to Trump. That's the Governor I'll be, because that's the fighter for Jersey that I've always been.

MY RECORD

For the last decade in Congress, I've been fighting to grow New Jersey's economy by supporting key industries and breaking down barriers to innovation, investment, and entrepreneurship. I was the original cosponsor of the Helping Angels Lead Our Startups (HALOS) Act of 2023, which ensures that individuals who want to invest in startups aren't held back by burdensome regulations—helping new businesses access capital, scale, and create jobs. I also cosponsored the bipartisan Protect Medical Innovation Act of 2018, which repealed the harmful 2.3% medical device tax that threatened life-saving products like pacemakers and artificial joints. Additionally,

I voted to delay the Health Insurance Tax (HIT), which disproportionately impacted North Jersey’s seniors and small businesses, and in 2023, I secured \$600,000 in federal funding to expand AI technologies at a local hospital in my district. I also led the Stablecoin Innovation Act, a bill designed to define and regulate qualified stablecoins, distinguish them from more volatile cryptocurrencies, and put key consumer protections in place. This legislation helps safeguard financial markets, protect investors, and support responsible growth in fintech innovation.

I’ve worked to strengthen American manufacturing by passing the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act, which invests in domestic semiconductor production, reduces dependence on foreign supply chains, and is projected to create thousands of high-skilled jobs while lowering costs for families and small businesses. I’ve also been a champion for New Jersey’s agricultural and rural communities—cosponsoring the Protecting Rural Renters Act to expand rental assistance in rural housing, the Veterans’ Agricultural Apprenticeship Act to help veterans find careers in farming, and the Butcher Block Act, which expands USDA meat processing grants for small farmers. And to support small businesses, I cosponsored the Small Business Cybersecurity Assistance Pilot Program Act, providing federal grants to help entrepreneurs strengthen their cyber infrastructure, and the Veterans Affairs Opportunity for Women-Owned Small Businesses Act, which expands federal contracting opportunities for women-owned businesses in the VA system.

AS GOVERNOR

I’ll make New Jersey the place where more businesses want to do business. As Governor, I will:

- Launch a door-to-door, firm-to-firm recruitment initiative that dispatches dedicated economic development ambassadors to high-growth companies in neighboring states to offer tailored relocation packages, including fast-tracked permitting, site selection support, and workforce development incentives, targeting sectors like tech, fintech, and manufacturing.
- Provide red-carpet treatment for all businesses, reducing bureaucratic hurdles and enhancing support for them.
- Continue the newly created Economic Council, which provides a regular forum for the business community to discuss, collaborate, and solve issues with the state.

But I’ll do more – to tackle the needs of the sectors I outlined above, where Jersey can and should outcompete the world:

A. Technology

- **Make permanent the 2-year pilot program supporting start-ups and strengthening the innovation economy.** As Governor, I’ll make the already successful NJ Accelerate Program (ran by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority) pilot a permanent program. The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) provides NJ-based entrepreneurs access to programs and supplies them with the tools and support to grow their businesses. The NJ Accelerate program supports startups that graduate from approved accelerator programs by providing financial incentives to establish and grow their businesses in New Jersey. Eligible companies can receive up to \$250,000 in matching investment loans and up to \$25,000 in rent support when they locate in approved collaborative workspaces within the state. Making this program permanent will

help attract high-growth industries—including AI, blockchain, clean energy, and fintech—and position New Jersey as a national leader in next-generation innovation.

- **One-Stop Shop for startups.** I will launch a statewide initiative that centralizes support for startups through a coordinated network of accelerators, incubators, and funding programs. This initiative will serve as a "one-stop shop" for entrepreneurs, providing streamlined access to workspace, mentorship, capital, research partnerships, and workforce development resources.
- **Promote energy production and lower energy costs.** I will expand generating capacity within New Jersey, so that we're less reliant on imported energy from other states. My previous plans include details about my "All-of-the-Above" approach to energy. This approach will be especially important for the tech industry because it will lower the cost of operating data centers.

A. Pharmaceuticals and Life Sciences

- **Encourage biotech startups and innovation:** As Governor, New Jersey will nurture smaller biotech and medical device startups to be the next generation of industry leaders. We'll expand incubator programs like Princeton's Innovation Center or Rutgers' TechAdvance to provide funding and lab space for biotech entrepreneurs. The state will also launch a Bio Innovation Challenge offering seed grants to scientists spinning innovations out of our universities (Rutgers, NJIT, Princeton, etc.). By reducing the cost of lab space and facilitating access to venture capital, we aim to grow more homegrown biotech firms. These startups often emerge where there is strong academic-industry collaboration, so we will bolster partnerships like Rutgers' Cancer Institute collaborations with pharma companies, or NJIT's medical device prototyping programs. The measure of success will be more biotech IP (patents, new drugs, devices) generated in NJ and more small companies scaling up their operations within the state.
- **Fight to claw back federal grant funding to universities.** New Jersey is home to many important research universities; it is unacceptable that we rank as one of the lowest states per capita when it comes to our universities receiving federal grant funding. As Governor, I'll fight to change this by investing in a centralized support services to help faculty submit stronger proposals. My Administration's "Clawback Czar" will help coordinate grant applications across schools and bring back every cent we are owed.
- **Expand New Jersey's Innovation Zones.** New Jersey should modernize its Innovation Zones by expanding them to include dedicated Life Sciences Manufacturing Districts that offer fast-track permitting, specialized infrastructure, and targeted tax incentives for biotech and medical device production. These upgraded zones could integrate manufacturing with research and commercialization, allowing startups to scale from lab to factory without leaving the state. By aligning Innovation Zones with advanced manufacturing needs, New Jersey would strengthen its position as a full-spectrum life sciences leader.
- **Establish a Life Sciences Manufacturing Fast-Track Program:** As Governor, I'll guarantee expedited permitting and licensing for critical medication, vaccine, and medical device production facilities, while maintaining environmental and safety standards. This will reduce wait times and improve processes across the state's

permitting, licensing, and certification processes. This is more important than ever after the Trump Administration's devastating cuts to the National Institute of Health and Centers for Disease Control.

C. Finance

- **Invest in infrastructure for finance workers:** Given the close ties between North Jersey and New York City's financial district, improving transportation is key to supporting the financial industry. The state will invest in transit projects that benefit commuters (see the below transportation section for more detail.) Reliable, quick commutes will encourage finance workers to live in New Jersey—and spend their salaries here.
- **Ensure a skilled financial workforce:** To support the finance sector, New Jersey will work with universities, community colleges, and training providers on programs in finance, accounting, and business analytics. We will expand internship opportunities by connecting New Jersey's college students with our financial firms (and with New York firms that have NJ offices). Scholarships could be offered for students who pursue finance-related degrees and then work in New Jersey for several years.
- **Connect Universities with Investors.** As Governor, I'll ensure New Jersey plays a coordinating role, working with NJIT, Rutgers, and Princeton to create spaces where new financial technology (fintech) companies can grow. These fintech hubs would offer things like shared office space, expert advice, help from professors and industry mentors, and chances to get funding. By tapping into the universities' strengths in tech and finance, these spaces would help turn ideas into real products faster. Partnerships with banks and investors would give startups a chance to test their tools in real-world settings and access the money they need to grow. This would help make New Jersey a top spot for financial innovation.
- **Claw back New York's taxing of our workforce.** We have the potential to gain \$1.4 billion in tax revenue by going after the taxes we're losing to New York State every year. And as Governor, I'll make sure we get that revenue back.

D. Manufacturing

- **Prioritize Jersey-Made in State Contracts.** I'll issue an executive order giving preference to Jersey-based manufacturers in state procurement, where legally permissible, to keep our dollars in-state and strengthen our industrial base.
- **Workforce Development and Support for Advanced Manufacturing.** 61% of manufacturers say they're struggling to fill critical labor gaps. As Governor, I will establish regional, consortium-based training hubs that bring together industry, educational institutions, and community organizations to deliver targeted, in-demand skills training, modeled after ON-RAMP in New York. By focusing on priority populations—such as underemployed individuals, veterans, and those not currently in the labor force—the initiative would provide accessible pathways into high-growth sectors like semiconductors, clean energy, and robotics. Incorporating wraparound services,

including childcare, transportation assistance, and case management, would address common barriers to participation. We will work closely with employers to design training programs that teach the exact skills they're looking for. This way, people who finish the programs will be ready to step into open jobs. It will help fill job openings now and make New Jersey a more attractive place for advanced manufacturing companies to grow.

- **Centralize and streamline training.** New Jersey will centralize its advanced manufacturing and automation training programs under a statewide initiative to improve coordination, access, and outcomes. By establishing a centralized talent network—housed within an agency like NJEDA or the Department of Labor—the state can align curriculum across institutions, ensure industry recognized credentials, and better connect training to employer demand. Creating a shared online portal would also allow jobseekers and manufacturers to easily connect and find programs. This approach would reduce fragmentation, raise training quality, and help fill critical workforce gaps in New Jersey's growing manufacturing and automation sectors.

E. Agriculture

- **Lower property taxes.** New Jersey's high property taxes are devastating for farmers who are already faced with the overall high cost of running farms. My plan to lower property taxes will support their ability to run and expand their businesses.
- **Preserve Jersey farmland.** New Jersey is projected to lose another 125,000 acres by 2040 to suburban development unless action is taken. To preserve farmland and the agricultural industry, I will expand the Farmland Preservation Program by increasing funding, streamlining the enrollment process for farmers to reduce administrative barriers, and prioritizing preservation efforts in areas most at risk of suburban development. Additionally, due to the aging farmer population, the program will offer enhanced incentives for young and beginning farmers to participate, as well as encourage regenerative agricultural practices on preserved lands.
- **Expand outlets for Jersey farm products.** To help more New Jersey farms sell their products and grow their businesses, I will invest in building more local food hubs and shared cold storage spaces. Right now, some groups have started this work, but the state needs to do more to make it easier for farmers to get their food to bigger buyers like schools, hospitals, and grocery stores. These food hubs will give small and mid-sized farms a place to bring their products together so they can be packed, stored, and delivered efficiently. New Jersey will also help farms buy cold storage units, packing equipment, and refrigerated trucks by offering grants and low-interest loans. This will cut down on food waste, keep produce fresher for longer, and make it easier for local farms to reach more customers across the state.
- **Streamline approvals processing.** I will streamline regulatory processes to make it easier for farmers to add basic on-farm processing capabilities, such as washing, chopping, canning, and packaging. Current permitting requirements are costly and time-consuming, discouraging small and mid-sized farms from expanding. By simplifying approvals for low-risk food processing facilities and creating a clear, expedited pathway

for farm-based operations, we will help farmers capture more value from their products, meet local food demand, and grow their businesses.

- **Establish a loan program for beginning farmers.** I will require the NJEDA to establish a loan program to assist beginning farmers to help pay for major, long-term investments.
- **Protect farm workers.** Labor shortages continue to be an issue impacting farming, made even worse by the Trump administrations immigration policies. I'll make sure New Jersey never partners with federal efforts to round up and deport the very people who keep our agricultural economy running. That means continuing the Immigrant Trust Directive and ensuring farmworkers feel safe accessing services, housing, and health care — without fear of ICE at their doorstep.
- **Cut Red Tape for Local Producers and Manufacturers.** I will streamline permitting and licensing for small farms, farmers markets, and local food producers — especially for small food operations and direct-to-consumer sales. If you're growing food here and feeding Jersey families, I want to make it easier, not harder, to stay in business. I'll also direct state agencies to streamline permitting and licensing for manufacturers, speeding up timelines without compromising standards.

F. Small Business

- **Establish a permanent Garden State Growth Fund.** As Governor, I will create a standing "Garden State Small Business Growth Fund" that pools state dollars with private-sector investment. This fund would ensure continuous, reliable access to capital for small businesses, particularly minority- and women-owned firms, without relying on one-time funding rounds.
- **Launch a first customer program.** New businesses often struggle to attract customers. As Governor, New Jersey will help small and minority-owned businesses secure their first major contracts by offering grants, technical support, and pilot opportunities with public agencies. Helping businesses land a first customer is proven to accelerate growth and improve long-term viability.
- **Subsidize loan interest rates for underserved entrepreneurs.** The state will subsidize interest rates on small business loans for entrepreneurs operating in distressed areas, hiring local workers, or meeting equity goals. Lower borrowing costs will make it easier for businesses to invest in growth and community revitalization.
- **Support MWBE entrepreneurs.** I'll create a standalone loan and grant program under NJEDA exclusively for MWBEs. This fund will offer startup capital, flexible microloans, and matching grants tailored to the needs of under-capitalized entrepreneurs who face systemic barriers in accessing traditional financing.
- **Create statewide access to capital navigators.** New Jersey will develop a centralized Access to Capital Navigator — a staffed or digital service that helps businesses quickly prequalify for state, federal, and private loan and grant programs. This one-stop shop will dramatically simplify the financing process and expand access to available resources.
- **Create a One-Stop business permitting portal.** New Jersey does not have a fully integrated, statewide online permitting portal that streamlines licensing and permitting for

business owners. As Governor, I will create an improved online permitting system, modeling it after states like Indiana and Pennsylvania's systems.

- **Slash annual business filing fees to neighbor state levels.** As Governor, I will make New Jersey the most business-friendly state in the northeast. To do this, I'll lower the business formation fee and annual fee to match those of our neighbors. This will mean a drop in the formation fee from \$125 to \$110 to match Delaware, and a cut in the annual fee from \$75 to only \$7 to equal Pennsylvania's. Together with my other tax cuts, this will make New Jersey the most competitive state in the region for business formation.
- **Offer tax benefits for investments in qualified small businesses.** New Jersey is currently one of five states that does not conform to federal QSBS (Qualified Small Business Stock) tax standards, meaning investors in New Jersey are taxed on QSBS gains at the full state income tax rate. As Governor, I will change this so New Jersey conforms to the QSBS tax exclusion. This will help encourage investment in small businesses in New Jersey.

III. **MAKING THE INVESTMENTS WE NEED IN OUR PEOPLE**

OUR CHALLENGE

New Jersey leads the nation in K–12 education, but we must do more to maintain that success and prepare our students for the future. Too many residents remain stuck in low-wage jobs without clear pathways to advancement, while employers in healthcare, green energy, and advanced manufacturing struggle to find skilled workers. Our colleges, community colleges, and vocational schools are under-resourced and often misaligned with labor market needs.

To meet this challenge, we must align education and training with high-demand careers, expand earn-and-learn opportunities like apprenticeships, and ensure every student graduates not just college-ready, but career-ready. My "Lower Costs Plan" includes fully expanding universal pre-K, all-day kindergarten, and universal school meals—critical foundations for long-term success.

We also face a growing teacher shortage, especially in math, science, special education, and English language instruction. As the daughter of a public school teacher, I understand how hard the job already is—we must support educators, not overburden them. Outdated, unfair school funding formulas and increasing class sizes threaten our progress. It's time to reform how we fund our schools and invest in the people who power our education system. Strengthening the full education-to-career pipeline is essential to securing New Jersey's economic future.

MY RECORD

In Congress, I've focused on strengthening our workforce and education systems to ensure opportunity, fairness, and economic security for all.

On workforce development, I'm a proud cosponsor of the Tax Fairness for Workers Act, which allows union members to deduct their dues from their taxes—recognizing and rewarding organized labor's critical role in our economy. I also led the Social Security Fairness Act, which

ensures public sector workers can receive both their full pensions and Social Security benefits, ending unfair offsets that penalize them for a lifetime of service.

In education, I've worked to address both access and equity from early childhood through the teaching profession. I'm an original cosponsor of the American Teacher Act, which tackles the teacher shortage crisis by providing grants to states to raise teacher salaries to at least \$60,000 and offer cost-of-living adjustments for educators earning above that threshold.

I've also cosponsored several key bills aimed at strengthening our education pipeline:

- The Early STEAM Achievement Act, which supports early childhood STEAM programs through federal grants;
- A bill to recruit and retain paraprofessionals in public elementary, secondary, and preschool programs;
- The IDEA Full Funding Act, which secures permanent federal support for special education services;
- The Loan Forgiveness for Educators Act, which expands and strengthens the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program;
- And the Success for Rural Students and Communities Act, which supports rural partnerships to boost post-secondary education and local economic development.

And, I've been fighting the Trump Administration's gutting of the Department of Education, which provides critical funding and oversight to our nation's schools. I'll keep fighting their attempts to hurt our educational systems.

Together, these efforts reflect my commitment to building a strong, inclusive economy—starting with fair treatment for workers and high-quality education for every child.

AS GOVERNOR

A. Workforce Development

- **Align workforce training with industry needs.** I will implement a Workforce Development Plan to bring employers and educators together. This will establish industry-specific workforce councils to continually update curricula and training programs. For example, if the green energy sector needs more certified solar installers or wind technicians, the state can quickly coordinate with vocational schools to create those programs. I will also establish a tailored job training program through the community college system to support companies relocating to or expanding in New Jersey. This initiative will equip workers with the precise skills these companies need, boosting local employment opportunities and strengthening New Jersey's workforce.
- **Strengthen public-private partnerships.** When I'm Governor, New Jersey will build strong public-private partnerships across key sectors to drive innovation and job growth.
 - In life sciences, the state will launch a New Jersey Life Sciences Council to coordinate lab space expansion, faster permitting, and global marketing.

- In advanced manufacturing, the state will work with NJMEP to help small and mid-sized manufacturers train workers in lean production, digital skills, and new technologies.
- In finance and fintech, partnerships with firms and universities will foster innovation in financial services and cybersecurity.

These collaborations will ensure workforce programs meet industry needs, streamline approvals, and strengthen New Jersey's leadership in high-growth industries.

- **Create workforce pipelines.** I will create strong workforce pipelines to prepare residents for high-demand careers across life sciences, green energy, advanced manufacturing, finance, and tech. The state will expand STEM education, vocational training, apprenticeships, and scholarships tied to key industries, while aligning community college and university programs with employer needs. Partnerships with unions, companies, and organizations like NJMEP will ensure workers are trained in fields like biotech, clean energy, manufacturing, finance, and software. By investing in career pathways from high school through post-graduate research and lifelong learning, New Jersey will build a skilled workforce ready to power the state's next era of economic growth.
- **Promote skill advancement for the unemployed.** As Governor, New Jersey will modernize its unemployment insurance system by adopting California's approach to job training eligibility, allowing claimants to enroll in training programs without requiring prior state approval and exempting them from work search requirements while in full-time, demand-aligned training. This change would reduce administrative barriers, make it easier for unemployed workers to access time-sensitive upskilling opportunities, and better align the state's workforce development efforts with economic realities.
- **Remove unnecessary degree requirements for many state jobs and encourage private employers to adopt skills-based hiring practices.** Requiring unnecessary degrees in job requirements creates barriers, especially for people from lower income backgrounds. While effort has been made by Governor Murphy to identify job classifications where college degrees are not essential and to revise accordingly, there has not been enough impact. When I'm Governor, I will follow Governor Shapiro in signing an executive order eliminating the four-year degree requirement for many state government positions. Positions like Parole Officer Recruiter and Business Manager should value professional experience over degrees.
- **Expand and standardize the use of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA).** Too often, adult learners are forced to start from scratch, even when they have years of relevant experience. PLA gives them credit for what they already know, making it easier to finish a degree, earn a promotion, or retrain for a new field. It also helps employers fill talent gaps faster with workers who already have applicable skills. As Governor, New Jersey will expand and standardize the use of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) policies across its public colleges, vocational programs, and workforce training initiatives. This would allow adult learners, veterans, and people who have changed their careers to earn academic credit for relevant work experience, military training, apprenticeships, or industry certifications—speeding up degree or credential completion and reducing costs.

- **Invest in Career Readiness starting in our schools.**
 - **Begin career-related instruction as early as middle school.** We must start providing career-related instruction as early as middle school, connect students to jobs, internships, and workplace experiences by high school, and turn the senior year of high school into a chance for early-college, meaningful career academies, or needed remediation for students not ready for either.
 - **Provide assistance for at-risk students.** Assistance for at-risk students will include Graduation Coaches, peer-student mentors, and engagement programs for at-risk students. We will support students who fall off track for on-time graduation by providing Graduation Coaches, peer mentors for troubled youth, and programs like entrepreneurship training, computer literacy, and conflict resolution to keep students engaged and successful.
 - **Require Personal Education Plans.** I'll require that every student by 9th grade has a Personal Education Plan for staying in school. These plans will address each student's education and career goals and should be reviewed annually with the student, their parents, and a guidance counselor to ensure that the student is staying on track and the school is providing the support needed.
 - **Promote affordable pathways.** Not everyone wants or needs a college education, and we must support career paths for everyone. As Governor, I will ensure New Jersey promotes other more affordable pathways like community college, vocational education, Commercial Driver's License (CDL) programs, and other affordable career training options.

B. Education

1. Close the Widening Achievement Gaps

- **Fully implement universal Pre-K and full-day kindergarten.** I will expand access to universal Pre-K and full-day kindergarten. Once fully implemented, I'll lower the compulsory education age from 6 to 5 to reduce early learning disparities. Expanding and requiring early education has long-term impact and will reduce achievement gaps across New Jersey.
- **Ensure universal breakfast and lunch.** I will implement a statewide universal breakfast and lunch program to ensure every student receives the nutrition they need to succeed. No child should go hungry at school.
- **Tackle absenteeism and attendance.** New Jersey has strong frameworks for attendance improvement and mental health supports. Going forward, the priority must be ensuring consistent implementation statewide, fully funding school-based teams, and scaling best practices from the highest-performing districts to reduce chronic absenteeism and support students' mental health.
- **Support limiting cellphone use in classrooms.** Cellphone usage in classrooms negatively impacts learning and lowers students' academic achievement. As Governor,

I'll support policies that limit cellphone use in New Jersey classrooms to protect instructional time.

2. Grow and Retain the Teacher Workforce

- **End the residency requirements for teachers.** Teachers will no longer be required to establish New Jersey residency within one year of starting their position. This change will help districts recruit from a larger and more diverse candidate pool. New Jersey will be joining the majority of states that don't require teachers to be residents of the states they teach in.
- **Streamline reciprocity for out-of-state teachers.** When I'm Governor, New Jersey will accept valid certifications from Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., mirroring Connecticut's policy.
- **Continue and expand loan forgiveness for teachers in high-need fields.** The current New Jersey Teacher Loan Redemption Program (NJTLRP) offers up to \$20,000 in student loan forgiveness over four years to certified teachers working in high-need fields at eligible schools. I will sustain and expand programs like NJTLRP to further reduce debt burdens and incentivize educators to stay in underserved schools and shortage areas.
- **Boost pension benefits for new teachers.** New Jersey has the least generous pension plans for new teachers in the country, at a time when our state needs to be attracting more teachers into the workforce. Chapter 78 (2011) created a Tier 5 pension plan that raised the retirement age from 60 to 65 and reduced the percentage of final salary that teachers earn toward their pension for each year of service. This unfair tier has made it harder to recruit new teachers. I will eliminate Tier 5 and restore pension equity, making the profession more attractive for young educators. In the short term, this would not be an expensive change, but it would have major long-term benefits for our teacher workforce.
 - **As Governor, I also will restore the Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) for retired first responders, teachers, and other public employees relying on the state pension system.**
- **Make New Jersey more affordable for educators.** As part of my broader affordability agenda, I will cut taxes to reduce the overall cost of living, making it easier for teachers to live and stay in the communities where they work.
- **Invest in GYO.** As Governor, I'll ensure the state begins tracking outcomes of Grow-Your-Own (GYO) teacher programs and expands the programs if they're found to be effective.

3. Reform the School Funding Formula

- **Continue making pension payments.** Public workers deserve to get what is owed to them. As Governor, I'll ensure pension payments continue under my administration as they did under Governor Murphy's.

- **Make the formula transparent.** The School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) sets property and income rates in an opaque way to determine a district's Local Fair Share. The Education Commissioner can currently adjust these rates without explanation, leading to unequal expectations for districts with similar capacity. By creating transparent benchmarks and requiring justification for rate-setting, we can monitor the impact of state policies and guide reforms to get school funding to where it's needed.
- **Stop raising taxes.** I've proposed a comprehensive plan to cut property taxes statewide by an average of 15% and provide a Renter Rebate — without undercutting public schools. I want to cut these taxes for everyone — and as Governor, I will.
- **Use post-pandemic data to inform the formula.** Current funding allocations are based on outdated data, some going as far back as 2008. Because of this, some districts are not receiving adequate funding. As Governor, I'll update formula inputs to reflect post-pandemic economic and demographic realities, using 2022 data where available.
- **Create greater funding stability.** Governor Murphy has improved the way the average property value and income data was estimated, changing it from the most current annual property value and income data, which led to significant year-to-year fluctuations in state aid allocations, to an average of the last three years. But I will take this further as Governor and change it to the average of the last five years. This will create more stability in the school funding structure.
- **Establish a Special Education Funding Review Task Force.** Our current school formula is not working and that is especially true for children who need special education. It's also clear that switching from the tiered funding system to the census-based funding model has been devastating for school districts with higher needs for special education. As Governor, a Special Education Funding Review Task Force will be established to evaluate the effectiveness of current state aid for special education and explore the feasibility of adopting a tier-based funding model. The task force will comprise of experts in legal, policy, or administrative dimensions of special education in New Jersey. The task force will conduct a comprehensive assessment and make recommendations to ensure more equitable and efficient allocation of special education resources. This task force will issue a final report with its findings and policy recommendations.

IV. MAKING THE INVESTMENTS WE NEED IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

OUR CHALLENGE

People in New Jersey rely on public transit more than almost any state in the country — yet NJ Transit is barely functioning. Delays are routine. Trains are overcrowded, buses get stuck in traffic, and service gets cut or reduced with little warning. And the worst part? Riders are being charged more and getting less. In 2024, NJ Transit raised fares by 15 percent while cutting key services, especially over the summer. For too many commuters, the trains don't run on time — and the government doesn't seem to care.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump and his MAGA allies have blocked infrastructure investments and gutted support for public transit systems. They've let Amtrak deteriorate, starved NJ Transit of federal funding, and fought efforts to modernize the Northeast Corridor. We're paying the price — in lost hours we could have been spending with our families, lower productivity, and a worsening climate crisis.

The truth is, our infrastructure is in crisis because the people in charge — from Washington to Trenton — have refused to take it seriously. They've treated public transit like a second-class service. That's not how we do things in Jersey. We know that buses and trains aren't just about getting from point A to point B — they're how people get to work, how families stay connected, and how we grow our economy.

And while New Jersey is ahead of many states in broadband access, I won't be satisfied until every household that wants high-speed internet has it. Whether it's getting to work, accessing education, or staying in touch with loved ones, modern infrastructure is essential — and it's time we started treating it that way.

MY RECORD

In Congress, I've worked relentlessly to modernize New Jersey's transportation infrastructure, improve safety, and expand access to broadband. I helped write, negotiate, and pass the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which is already delivering for our state—funding the Gateway Tunnel, repairing our aging roads, bridges, and transit systems, building climate resilience, and removing lead from our children's drinking water. It's also investing in electric vehicles, broadband expansion, and job creation across the country. As part of this effort, I clawed back \$180 million for NJ TRANSIT's Delco Lead track project to reduce rail congestion and store hundreds of railcars, and secured \$59 million to improve passenger circulation at Newark Penn Station.

Beyond that, I've led on numerous legislative efforts to protect riders, improve reliability, and secure New Jersey's transportation future. I wrote key provisions of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, requiring secondary cockpit barriers on all commercial planes—one of the 9/11 Commission's top recommendations—and a federal study into persistent flight delays in the tri-state area. I led the Anti-Congestion Tax Act of 2023, pushed the All Aboard Act to guarantee refunds for NJ TRANSIT and Amtrak riders, and passed Miranda's Law to keep dangerous

drivers off school buses. I also advanced the FRA Safety Improvement Act to improve rail safety and transparency, and the Preventing Doomsday Act to hold the federal government accountable for contingencies in the event of a Gateway Tunnel failure. Through the Get on Board to Fix the Tunnel Act, I ensured federal coordination to fast-track the Gateway Project and boost commuter efficiency.

I'm also committed to advancing long-term transit innovation. As an original cosponsor of the American High-Speed Rail Act, I support a \$205 billion investment to build fast, clean rail that would create 2.6 million jobs and offer a reliable alternative to air and road travel.

In addition to transportation, I've prioritized digital infrastructure. I've called for an extension of the Affordable Connectivity Program to protect broadband access for low-income families and urged state officials to release clawed-back federal broadband funds for Sussex and Warren Counties. I've also pushed for COVID-19 relief dollars to support broadband expansion in rural and underserved communities—because no family should be left behind in the digital economy.

AS GOVERNOR, I WILL

A. Transportation

- **Increase the number of priority bus travel lanes.** An easy way to speed up buses is simply decreasing traffic. Creating priority bus lanes is a quick and effective way to get buses moving faster.
- **Increase efficiency at NJ Transit.** There needs to be a top to bottom efficiency review of NJ Transit to help modernize operations and give its workers the support they need to improve service – just as I will introduce in state government.
- **Expand bus service.** I will add more – and newer – buses, drivers and routes to improve transit options in Jersey.
- **Replace outdated buses and train cars.** As Governor, I'll hold NJ Transit accountable to its promise to fully modernize the transit agency's bus and train fleets before 2031.
- **Increase pay.** To increase the bus service, the pay for bus drivers must be increased. Every day in New Jersey, we have buses that don't make it to every bus stop simply because we don't have enough drivers. Why? Because our bus operator's wages are too low. As Governor, I will increase the bus operator wages to be competitive with other neighboring states so we can have a fully staffed and fully functional bus system. This will also allow New Jersey to increase the number of bus routes.
- **Hold Amtrak accountable.** The state of New Jersey makes an annual payment of \$200 million to Amtrak. But Amtrak's been sticking it to us for years now. The catenaries and the tracks that Amtrak is supposed to maintain are in shambles. These need to be repaired, and Amtrak needs to repair them. If we're paying this money to Amtrak, they must hold up their end of the bargain. When I'm Governor, I will hold up the approximately \$200 million per year that we pay Amtrak until it fixes the switches and catenaries or gives us authority to do so ourselves. I will put the \$200 million in escrow until the repairs are made. If they delay long enough, New Jersey will fix the catenaries and tracks ourselves, and subtract that from our payment to Amtrak.

- **Increase park-and-ride options.** There is high demand in New Jersey for park-and-ride buses that take people from New Jersey to New York City. As Governor, I will increase the number of parking spaces for the park-and-rides and therefore increase the number of people who are able to access them. Increasing access to park-and-ride will decrease carbon emissions and save people in New Jersey money on gas and on tolls.
- **Fund transit-oriented communities.** New Jersey law encourages transit-oriented housing development; it needs also to encourage transit-oriented transit improvements. If we're going to tell communities we want them to build out the areas around train stations and bus stops for more people, we need to help them make those transit stops more attractive, appealing, desirable for residents to use, spurs for development and, in many cases, sources of historical or aesthetic pride. As Governor, I will allow communities to use part of the money set aside for affordable housing incentives to improve public transit facilities to encourage their use and expand transit-oriented development.
- **Reimburse for canceled and late trains.** Train delays cost the people of New Jersey money. It causes them to be late for work, to miss important appointments, and to spend less time with their loved ones. When I'm Governor of New Jersey, if a train is cancelled or late by more than 30 minutes, riders will be issued a refund for their ticket. Train delays cost people money; it's time that New Jersey transit starts to pay for that.
- **Fix the NJ Transit smartphone app.** There is no point in having a transit app that is not usable or useful to riders. I'll ensure that it's revamped to be more user friendly and ensure that it provides real-time notifications of delayed and canceled trains and buses.
- **Increase ferry service.** Expanding ferry services in New Jersey will ease traffic congestion, provide commuters with reliable alternatives to crowded highways and trains, and strengthen connections to key job centers like New York City. Ferries also support our environmental goals by reducing emissions. Additionally, increasing the ferry infrastructure can boost local economies and raise property values.
- **Ensure New Jersey gets its fair share from the Port Authority.** Most capital investment made by Port Authority benefits New York, despite New Jersey commuters contributing the vast majority of the toll revenue. As Governor, I'll stand up to the Port Authority and fight for New Jersey to get our fair share. The Governor of New Jersey has various ways to block PA actions when necessary, including the power to veto the minutes of Port Authority board meetings, which would stop implementation of the board's decisions, and refusing to put items on the agenda to begin with. I will work with the New Jersey Commissioners to utilize all these tools and more, to ensure that New Jersey stops getting the short end of the stick.
- **Increase hiring of Air Traffic Controllers.** The chaos we've seen at Newark in recent weeks has been frightening and unacceptable. We've had Air Traffic Controller (ATC) shortages for years, which has put immense stress on people in those roles. As Governor, I'll work to increase the number of Jersey-based ATC professionals. New Jersey will run a communication campaign to promote ATC jobs as high-paid, no-degree-required careers through workforce boards, community centers, and job fairs. I will also coordinate with Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to transition veterans and military personnel with air traffic experience into civilian ATC roles. Then, I'll work with the

federal government to bring these new hires online at the FAA – and pursue them relentlessly to institute the critical upgrades we need to the crumbling and aging infrastructure in the FAA that I worked successfully to fund in Congress.

- **Address South Jersey’s unique transit needs.** South Jersey often gets overlooked in statewide transit planning, yet it faces real challenges—long distances, limited rail access, and underfunded services. To build equity and connectivity across regions, I will make the following investments:
 - Expand the existing PATCO rail line south to Glassboro.
 - Collaborate with Pennsylvania officials to ensure continued operation and funding of SEPTA's Trenton Line.
 - Increase the frequency, reliability, and convenience of NJ Transit’s Atlantic City Rail Line and Shore-bound trains.
- **Continue fighting New York’s Congestion Tax.** New Jersey commuters are stuck paying an additional \$9 tax when driving into Manhattan. For daily commuters, like nurses, firefighters, and others, this can add up to thousands of dollars a year. Plus, New Jersey is bearing the brunt of increased truck traffic. I’ll continue fighting Governor Hochul’s congestion tax. When I’m Governor, it will not continue.

B. Broadband

- **Increase public free Wi-Fi.** Reliable internet access is a basic necessity for full participation in today’s economy and education system. By expanding free public Wi-Fi across public spaces like transit systems, parks, libraries, and downtown kiosks, the state can help close the digital divide—especially for low-income residents, students, and jobseekers who may lack consistent home broadband or may have limited data on their cellphones. Prioritizing coverage in underserved neighborhoods ensures equitable access to essential services, online learning, and job applications.
- **Lift legal and administrative barriers for towns to create their own networks or partner with providers.** Some municipalities want to improve internet access but are blocked by outdated regulations or unclear authority. The state should remove legal restrictions that prevent towns from building their own broadband networks or forming public-private partnerships.
- **Increase mobile hotspot lending in schools.** Too many students still lack reliable internet access at home, which puts them at a disadvantage for homework, research, and remote learning. Expanding mobile hotspot lending programs through schools and libraries can provide an immediate, cost-effective solution. These programs should be fully funded, easy to access, and supported with multilingual outreach to ensure families know they’re available and how to use them effectively.
- **Support creation of broadband cooperatives.** To expand high-speed internet access in rural New Jersey, I will support the creation of community broadband cooperatives—locally-owned entities that build and manage networks where commercial ISPs have little incentive to invest. Communities in Minnesota, Colorado, and Tennessee have all seen success in establishing these cooperatives. New Jersey will offer seed funding, technical

assistance, and regulatory support to help rural communities like those in Sussex, Warren, and Salem counties form cooperatives or expand existing utility services into broadband. These cooperatives would ensure local control, reinvest profits into infrastructure and affordability, and provide reliable service tailored to community needs.