



ROADMAP TOWARD A JUST, GREEN RECOVERY

2020 Report





Jersey Renew's is a broad coalition of labor, environment, and faith organizations working to make New Jersey a leader in climate policy by increasing clean energy infrastructure, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and ensuring good, family-sustaining jobs in the transition to a clean energy economy.

NJ Renew's Coalition Partners

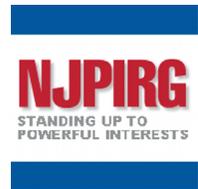


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Increasingly, the conversation on the COVID-19 response has pivoted from the still very real health crisis to the economic crisis facing states. The COVID-19 disaster, of course, doesn't eliminate our climate crisis. In fact, research shows the same pollution causing the climate crisis also makes COVID-19 more deadly, disproportionately harming low-income communities and communities of color. The disruption caused by the pandemic is the latest in a string of disruptions that New Jersey has faced over the past decade, including Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, both of which destroyed homes, neighborhoods, and livelihoods. As the climate emergency era continues, we know these disruptions will become an increasingly normal part of our lives.

Fortunately, as Governor Murphy and state legislative leaders consider measures to stimulate economic recovery, we also have an opportunity to make investments that will safeguard against these future shocks: by rebuilding critical infrastructure, expanding and electrifying our mass transit system, ensuring safe drinking water for every home in the state and charting a clean, renewable energy future. We also have an opportunity to ensure precious relief funds go to those most deeply affected—communities of color especially representing Black, brown and Indigenous lives, poor communities, people with disabilities, transit, healthcare and other essential workers. Rising sea levels, increasingly severe storms, hotter summers—all of these call for investments that will give us a more sustainable future while helping us adapt to the new world we face.

Accordingly, to ensure a just and green recovery from all these overlapping crises, NJ policy makers must adhere to the following 10 principles:

- 1) Expand Resources for Public Health
- 2) Protect Workers and Our Environment
- 3) Fully Fund and Electrify the Transportation Sector
- 4) Build Up Renewables
- 5) Buy American
- 6) Develop a Green Workforce
- 7) Renew Green and Efficient Buildings
- 8) Restore Healthy Homes
- 9) Repair Our Infrastructure
- 10) Invest Money in the Public Good

EXPAND RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it's that we are all connected, and an effective response requires full protection for every person and community in our state—not just those who can afford it, not just those with the privilege to stay home. In addition to properly resourcing our healthcare system, we must take measures to prevent disease spread in circumstances where social distancing is impossible:

- Increase staffing levels at the Department of Health.
- Establish safe patient-staff ratios for hospitals and safe ratios for cleaners and environmental service workers.
- Supply hospitals and urgent care centers with stockpiles of personal protective equipment.
- Plan and make purchasing commitments for adequate testing capacity now and for the future.
- Expand the number of private and public labs authorized to conduct tests and increase drive-through testing and home testing options. Prepare safe plans to bring tests to those unable to travel to testing sites.
- Identify spaces where patients who are unable to quarantine at home may temporarily shelter.
- Develop a robust contact tracing system.
- Upon initial restrictions of public movement:
- Enact a moratorium upon all immigration enforcement actions
- Create a quickly executable prisoner and immigration detainee release program for all low level nonviolent offenses
- Enact immediate vote-by-mail provisions

PROTECT WORKERS AND OUR ENVIRONMENT

COVID-19 has made it clear that worker health is public health. As New Jersey makes plans for re-opening workplaces, it must maximize the safety, health and financial well-being of workers—including essential workers such as farmworkers and domestic workers who are often excluded from labor protections. Our state regulatory agencies need the resources to counteract neglect at the federal level and to enforce and strengthen critical environmental and labor protections. The state should:

- Mandate and enforce state COVID-19 health and safety protections for ALL workers.
- Ensure that health and safety training is an integral part of any prevention plan.
- Guarantee the right for workers to refuse unsafe working conditions without fear of retaliation.
- Guarantee job protection and just compensation for those working and those unable to work.
- Involve workers, and unions in all planning regarding workplace safety and return-to-work.
- Develop a meaningful system of screening, testing, contact tracing and employee notification of a potential COVID-19 workplace exposure.
- Mandate all employers permit and encourage employees not to work when sick.
- Ensure that employers who fail to implement appropriate protective measures and egregiously expose workers to the risk of COVID-19 are not shielded from civil or criminal liability.

- Enact meaningful protections for migrant and seasonal farmworkers by mandating the Department of Health and Agriculture Interim Guidelines issued on May 20, 2020.
- Support designating grocery, retail, warehouse, food production and food delivery workers as “first responders,” so that they receive immediate access to coronavirus testing, priority access to childcare, and grants from the federal stimulus bill.
- Enforce federal and state environmental regulations, and strengthen state-level protections.
- Put an end to fast track permitting.
- Accelerate [toxic waste site](#) cleanup, while maintaining strict environmental standards.
- Require polluters to pay for environmental damage.

FULLY FUND AND ELECTRIFY THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

Among the most urgent crises facing our state is the need to bail out NJ Transit: essential workers need safe, accessible public transportation right now, and as the state begins to open up, we all need to be able to travel safely. Beyond the immediate necessity of funding, electrification is an essential next step to reducing air pollution that harms the health of many New Jerseyans and exacerbates COVID-19 risk. Our transportation sector remains the largest source of carbon and air pollution in the state, and even with the dip in travel based on COVID-19, we need to focus on electrification as part of our environmental and economic recovery. The state should:

- Advocate for the full federal recovery funding of an additional \$1.2 billion from Congress for NJ Transit.
- Create a dedicated source of funding for NJ Transit which will provide ongoing funding for NJ Transit’s capital and operating needs to be able to provide the funding necessary to fix NJ Transit’s massive unfunded capital needs, some of which were outlined in the recently released NJ Transit Capital Plan. The NJTA Capital Plan will provide massive new funding infusions of \$16 billion for highway expansions across the state, and we need to increase the historical funding for NJ Transit via transfers from the NJTA.
- Ensure funding needs are not met with fare increases so that riders do not shoulder an additional financial burden in the midst of widespread economic hardship.
- Electrify the NJ Transit system, beginning with the full funding for electrification of NJ Transit bus pilots and future bus purchases, watchdog the rollout of the Camden bus pilot to ensure it launches in 2021 and to advocate for funding through the NJBPU PSEG and ACE EV utility filings or NJ Transit’s capital funding, as well as electrification of school bus fleets as part of Vehicle To Grid electric grid modernization.
- Invest in the adoption of electric trucks via the electrification of the medium and heavy duty vehicle sector via the annual RGGI auction investments of more than \$60 million and the VW Settlement second tranche of funding close to \$40 million. These investments should prioritize public sector electrification projects, focused on environmental justice communities.
- Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure and prioritize urban areas, to ensure that the mandates of the EV bill are met with thorough distribution of charging stations across the state, including 400 fast EV chargers on our busiest traveled roads and more than 1,000 Level II EV chargers in downtown communities. Ensure chargers are distributed throughout the state, but put a focus on electric charging stations in our most heavily air polluted communities and counties. Advocate for EV PSEG and ACE utility filings to invest in this charging network.

- Craft a well-structured regional Transportation Climate Initiative program where revenue leads to significant emission reductions in environmental justice communities, while also ensuring that these communities receive the benefits of more transportation options and access to well-paying jobs.
- Develop and expand electric car-sharing and ride-sharing pilots in urban environmental justice communities that struggle with mobility issues to enable residents to get to work safely.
- Expand public transit and paratransit service to ensure people of all abilities and from all areas of the state have access to affordable transportation, and to reduce crowding on board.

BUILD UP RENEWABLES

Labor Department data show 106,000 clean energy workers lost their jobs in March alone; other projections estimate 500,000 more jobs lost in the coming months. But by reinvesting in the renewable sector, we can simultaneously meet our climate goals, bring affordable power to communities facing electricity shut offs, and stimulate New Jersey’s recovery with thousands of good, union jobs—there is no better time than now.

- Implement the 2018 Clean Energy Act by increasing the use of clean, renewable energy from off-shore wind, solar (grid-supply/utility-scale, community solar and rooftop solar), small hydro and battery storage.
- Move forward with off-shore wind solicitations that will provide certainty for the investment of the off-shore wind supply chain and allow the state to reach its 7500 MW off-shore wind goal by 2035.
- Fully invest in the development of the NJ Wind Energy Port, through investments by NJEDA and other parties of up to \$400 million, to move forward with the marshalling and manufacturing port on Artificial Island in Lower Alloways Creek so that construction can move forward in 2021, as well as investments in other offshore wind energy ports across the state, including Paulsboro, and implement efforts to diversity the offshore wind supply chain by NJEDA.
- Pass the Clean Energy Equity Act to reduce energy burdens of 250,000 low-income households or 35% of New Jersey’s low-income population through a combination of solar, storage, and energy efficiency by 2030; Install 400 megawatts of storage, either within single-family homes or at a community level by 2030 in overburdened communities.
- Develop solar or clean energy curriculum and paid workforce training programs that provide training to at least 2,500 individuals from overburdened communities by 2025.
- Allocate \$50 million annually through the Clean Energy Fund and establish the Office of Clean Energy Equity (OCEE).
- Eliminate burdensome requirements of qualifying low-income households for community solar projects.
- Inclusive financing programs and create or expand revolving loan funds.
- Increase resilience at critical facilities, ensuring equity in deploying resources. Federal and state funding should target updating the energy infrastructure of critical facilities, especially in disadvantaged communities.
- Address workforce barriers for vulnerable populations. Modernize workforce development policies to offer wrap-around services that support training, especially for those who face barriers to employment.

BUY AMERICAN

Investing in domestic and regional manufacturing will stimulate our economic recovery while building resilience to future health, economic and climate shocks. New Jersey should:

- Review all state procurement policies to include Buy American provisions.
- Create specific procurement provisions for American-made clean energy and clean transportation goods, ensuring that procurement policies follow the guidelines of the U.S. Employment Plan.
- Develop a local supply chain, including wind energy component manufacturing hubs across the state, to connect to the recently announced NJ Wind Port.
- Increase funding for grants and incentives that support clean energy manufacturing.
- Support and invest in existing domestic manufacturing.

DEVELOP A GREEN WORKFORCE

Green job training could offer high-quality job opportunities for thousands of laid-off workers who, in turn, would improve the environment and economy in their immediate communities. New Jersey should:

- Invest in job training programs, including union apprenticeship programs, entrepreneurship training, and community-based training centers. Improved access for women and people of color to career pathways within the green economy should be a major policy goal.
- Revive the state incentive program to fund hiring of green job training graduates.
- Cross-train professional home visitors on energy efficiency and environmental health issues such as mold and lead contamination.
- Fund labor-management training programs for building service workers that teach the skills to operate, maintain and clean buildings using the latest techniques, technology and know-how.
- Create community service programs modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps that pay young people a living wage and offer tuition scholarships and/or additional job training in exchange for work in the following areas: COVID-19 tracking and public health, ecological restoration, regenerative farming and food access, education, childcare and elder care, direct service and community organizing.

RENEW GREEN AND EFFICIENT BUILDINGS

As many families have become unable to afford their utility bills over the last three months, the imperative to invest in weatherization and energy efficiency is even stronger. Energy efficiency and other green building improvements are also critical to meeting emissions reduction goals and can create many local, accessible, family-sustaining jobs. New Jersey should:

- Implement the mandates of the 2018 Clean Energy Act for reductions of energy use by 2% annually for electric utilities and .75% for gas, clarified in the 2020 Energy Efficiency Transition Program.
- End the annual state budgetary practice of raiding the Clean Energy Fund to balance state budgets so that the fund can be instead invested in its intended purposes.

- Improve green building standards for new and existing construction.
- Resource local building departments to implement energy efficiency standards and incentivize up-to-code improvements for buildings designed and built to lower standards.
- Dedicate funding to fixing homes with health, safety, or structural issues so that all residents can participate in State Energy Programs (Comfort Partners or Weatherization Assistance Program).
- Create a clearinghouse of state department and agency representatives using the “whole house” concept to oversee and coordinate state all health, safety, and energy programs to more effectively improve housing conditions.
- Fast track heat pump installation and electrification items in the Energy Master Plan. .
- Fast track the development and execution of an energy code compliance baseline study as proposed in the 2020 Energy Efficiency Transition Program to identify concrete steps to get started on the work to decarbonize New Jersey’s building stock.
- Work with labor unions and industry stakeholders to ensure the transition of New Jersey’s buildings creates good family sustaining jobs.
- Identify programs, like the installation of heat pumps proposed in the EMP, that can be ramped up to create good jobs immediately. These programs should also use an environmental justice filter to ensure that technology is going to the communities that need it the most.
- Implement more effective C-PACE legislation to spur private low-cost funding for small businesses and multifamily energy efficiency and renewable energy projects throughout the state as these upgrades will lower electric costs and improve building conditions.
- Prioritize the creation of a Green Fund that focuses on innovative and first-of-its kind programs to develop environmental justice and LMI community small business programs that bring together energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, lowering costs and improving the health of the community.

RESTORE HEALTHY HOMES FOR ALL NEW JERSEYANS

While many of us are privileged to be able to shelter in place during this quarantine, staying indoors isn’t necessarily safe for everyone. Sickness, layoffs and hours reductions have also put many families in jeopardy of utility shutoffs, or of losing their homes altogether. To protect the hundreds of thousands of New Jersey families currently sheltering-in-place in toxic living conditions, and to ensure that every New Jerseyan can maintain access to basic needs like secure shelter, healthy food, running water and electricity, the state should:

- Mitigate the lead paint hazards in all homes with comprehensive lead hazard control.
- Replace the lead water pipes and plumbing that service our homes and schools.
- Train and staff up the Lead Workforce and ensure local hiring.
- Invest in hydroponic/vertical farming to promote food security, specifically in lower-income communities.
- Enact a full moratorium upon all housing evictions, electricity and water shutoffs, and suspensions of phone and internet services for the duration of future quarantines plus three months.

REPAIR OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

The condition of roads, bridges, schools, water treatment plants, and other physical assets will greatly impact our economy's ability to recover and grow. New Jersey should:

- Repair and upgrade existing natural gas distribution pipeline systems to reduce methane leakage.
- Ensure municipal compliance with the long term control plan required by the Clean Water Act for both gray and green infrastructure (stormwater management/combined sewer overflow) including but not limited to pervious pavement, rain gardens, green roofs, planted swales, etc.
- Focus on repairing existing roads and bridges and improving mass transit, not unnecessary highway widenings.
- Remove or mitigate sources of lead that contaminate water, including lead service lines.
- Repair and, when necessary, rebuild schools to provide healthy, safe and modernized facilities for all New Jersey students.
- Invest in cost-effective measures to mitigate sea level rise that are environmentally friendly and do not cause harm to adjacent communities.

INVEST PUBLIC MONEY IN THE PUBLIC GOOD

We know the economic impact of COVID-19 has been devastating, upwards of a \$10 billion shortage for the New Jersey state budget. It is critical that budget restrictions do not fall on the backs of those already hardest hit by the pandemic, as too often happens in moments of economic crisis. A public bank would enable the public to take more efficient and productive control of the state's money, reverse upward trends for state debt and taxes that extract public wealth, and properly redirect state resources toward public interests. New Jersey should:

- Establish a public bank without delay.
- Use bonding to ensure the state has the capital it needs to provide basic essential services and fully staff all state agencies and public services.
- Raise new revenue in an equitable and sustainable manner that centers anti-racist values and poor communities during the recovery. Revenue raisers should include reforming the millionaire's tax, an estate tax and corporate business taxation policies, as well as consideration of other equitable revenue sources. The state should, by any means, avoid cutting more of New Jersey's public services and assets, on the backs of our poor and working class residents, to balance its budget.
- Establish the Green Fund as a standalone non-profit entity to protect funding and allow for innovation in program design and implementation and use the allocated RGGI funds to drive robust private investment in projects that prioritize social impact and clean energy investment.
- Conduct an analysis of required staffing levels to ensure all NJ Departments can carry out their missions.

INTRODUCTION

The focus on the COVID-19 response has pivoted from the still very real health crisis to the huge economic crisis facing states, specifically New Jersey, and how we can restart our economies in a way that will stave off economic disaster. At the same time, as our country begins to reckon with a deeply entrenched legacy of systemic racism, we must acknowledge that our health, economic and climate crises come as a triple whammy to Black, brown and Indigenous communities. A meaningful and sustained recovery must address all three.

We know that the COVID-19 disaster doesn't eliminate our climate crisis. In fact, research shows the same pollution causing the climate crisis also makes COVID-19 more deadly—and extreme weather events this spring have compromised people's ability to social distance, forcing some to choose between protecting their health and sheltering safely from disaster. The economic reopening must focus on restarting and reinvigorating our clean energy economy. A recent Morning Consult's tracking poll of more than 2,000 voters found that a clean energy stimulus project had a much higher approval rating than an oil industry bailout. 56 percent of voters supported a clean energy stimulus, with only 24 percent opposed, while a majority of polled voters—43 percent—opposed an oil industry bailout. These national findings should guide the process for jump-starting New Jersey's economy with a clean, green stimulus focus.

Gov. Murphy has outlined a vision for re-opening the state, entitled, "The Road Back: Restoring Economic Health Through Public Health," saying his roadmap is designed to get New Jersey back on our feet. "Our priority is to use science, data, and facts to put New Jersey on the road to recovery. In order to restore economic health, we must first promote public health," said Governor Murphy.

We firmly support that vision. Jersey Renews, a diverse coalition of faith, community, labor and environmental community organizations working toward state-based policy solutions to address climate change, lays out and documents 10 core principles that must be the foundation for any just, green economic recovery.

So, what does a just, green recovery look like? As Governor Murphy and state Legislative leaders considers measures to stimulate the economy in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, there is an opportunity to invest in rebuilding and strengthening critical infrastructure around the state; expand and electrify our mass transportation system, build water infrastructure that fulfills the intent of the Clean Water Act to provide fishable and swimmable water and to bring clean, safe drinking water to every home and business in the state, and to chart an energy future that invests in moving forwards a clean, renewable energy future. We must prioritize communities that have been overburdened with pollution for decades.

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is the most recent in a string of disruptions that New Jersey has faced over the past decade, and which include Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy, both of which destroyed homes, neighborhoods, and livelihoods. As the climate emergency era continues, we know that these disruptions will become an increasingly normal part of our lives. Let us be clear: these are not one-off occurrences. We must respond with compassion, speed, and justice.

Precious relief funds should be used to support those most deeply affected, especially those on the front lines of any crisis—Black, brown and Indigenous communities, poor communities, people with disabilities, transit and healthcare workers, and others whose work puts them at risk when society faces disasters. This is no time for crony capitalism which channels hard-earned public funds into the pockets of well-connected, wealthy corporations.

Furthermore, we have reached a moment at which massive investment in our state's infrastructure is no longer optional. Rising sea levels, increasingly severe storms, hotter summers—all of these call for investments that will give us a more sustainable future while helping us adapt to the new world we face.



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INCREASE RESOURCES FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

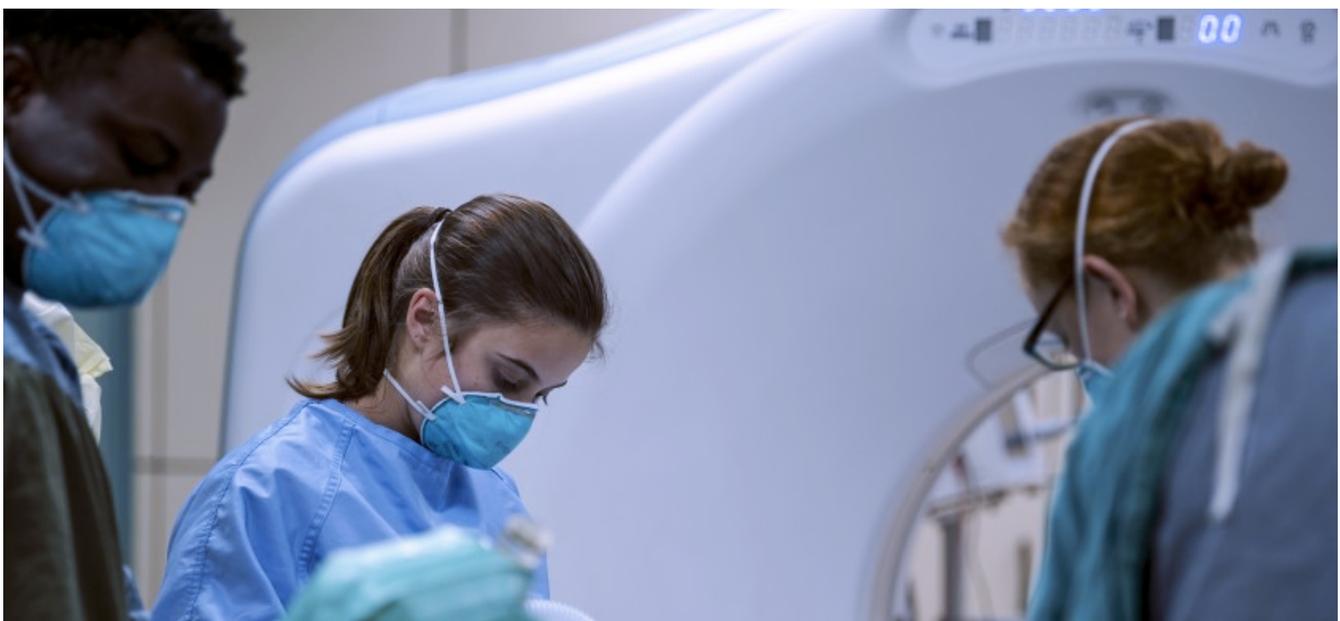
Is there a duty to safeguard the public through public healthcare planning? How are risks and benefits of healthcare distributed fairly in a crisis mode? How do supply chains respond to the public healthcare crisis? How are decisions made regarding who is supplying and what is being supplied and to which populations? Are the populations who are at most risk, people of color, those with chronic illnesses, the poor, single women with children, etc. always to be left out of public health planning?

A society needs to plan for the worst as it hopes for the best outcome in any public healthcare crisis. The duty of public healthcare has to be that of adaptability and flexibility to change to real time life circumstances. This includes the knowledge that personal protective equipment (PPE) needs to be accessed by multiple areas of the society, not only hospitals. Healthcare workforce, especially hospital staff, is a priority, of course.

An effective response requires full protection for every person and community in our state—not just those who can afford it, not just those with the privilege to stay home.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Supply hospitals and urgent care centers with stockpiles of personal protective equipment, sanitation gear and supplies, and resources to accommodate an potential influx of patients one may expect in densely populated cities.
- Establish safe patient-staff ratios at public hospitals and urgent care centers so that nurse-to-patient ratios do not negatively impact patient outcomes, and safe ratios for cleaners and environmental services workers so that they are not overworked, overextended, or exposed to disease.
- Develop a robust contact tracing system that reflects the diversity of New Jersey’s population.
- Expand the number of private and public labs authorized to conduct tests and increase drive-through testing and home testing options. Prepare safe plans to bring tests to those who are elderly, incapacitated or otherwise unable to travel to testing sites.
- Plan and make purchasing commitments for adequate testing capacity now and for the future.
- Increase staffing levels at the New Jersey Department of Health.
- Identify and prepare spaces in which patients who are unable to quarantine in a home setting may shelter until they are in improved health and capable of returning home.
- Enact a moratorium upon all immigration enforcement actions upon the initial restrictions of public movement for reducing disease spread, barring violent offenses representing danger to the public. Inform and train law enforcement, corrections personnel and immigration enforcement personnel on the terms and parameters of these suspended actions.
- Create a quickly executable prisoner and immigration detainee release program for all low level nonviolent crimes and offenses, including immigration offenses, executable immediately upon the enactment of any initial restrictions on public movement and mobility for purposes of containing viral spread.
- Enact immediate vote-by-mail provisions statewide for all voters upon initiation of public movement restrictions to contain disease spread and if not codified into state law by the time of the lifting of restrictions, make sure vote by mail rules are the last restrictions lifted.





PROTECT WORKERS AND OUR ENVIRONMENT

Our air is cleaner than it's been in a long time. But it got that way because of a deadly virus that shut down the economy. Unfortunately, the federal government is using the cover of COVID-19 as an opportunity to weaken environmental standards, so when the economy recovers, the public will be at greater risk of asthma and other illnesses than before—and our climate will be even more threatened.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency worsened the pandemic by relaxing enforcement and signaling to companies they need not meet environmental standards—putting already overburdened communities in greater danger. The Clean Water Act is under attack and threatening our access to clean water.

Simultaneously, the federal government has also failed to enact the necessary measures to protect the safety and health of the nation's workforce. The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration has refused to issue a standard to protect workers from exposure to COVID-19 and implemented a minimal enforcement policy to respond to worker and referral complaints. Much of the coordination and guarantee of worker protections rests at the state level. Although Governor Murphy has taken additional measures to protect workers through Executive Orders, the main obstacle has been mandating and enforcing it.

COVID-19 has made it clear that worker health is public health.

Workers in every workplace are on the front-lines of the battle against this deadly virus and need mandatory protections. Covid-19 made it clear that worker health is public health. Action must be taken to protect the most vulnerable workers among us and bold measures must be enacted to address the underlying disparities and injustices that were laid bare by the pandemic. Latinx and Black workers are disproportionately represented in low wage, high hazard industries that were deemed essential.

New Jersey must invest in our state regulatory agencies so that they have the resources to enforce environmental and labor protections and counteract neglect and recklessness at the federal level.



WORKER SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Mandate and enforce state COVID-19 health and safety protections for ALL workers, informed by science and designed with input from workers, worker center/COSH groups, unions and employers.
- Ensure that health and safety training is an integral part of any prevention plan.
- Guarantee the right for workers to refuse unsafe working conditions without fear of retaliation.
- Guarantee job protection and just compensation for those working and those unable to work.
- Involve workers and unions in all planning regarding workplace safety and return-to-work.
- Develop a meaningful system of screening, testing, contact tracing and employee notification of a potential COVID-19 workplace exposure.
- Mandate that all employers permit and encourage employees not to work when sick.
- Ensure that employers who fail to implement appropriate protective measures and egregiously expose workers to the risk of COVID-19 are not shielded from civil or criminal liability.
- Enact meaningful protections for migrant and seasonal farmworkers by mandating the Department of Health and Agriculture Interim Guidelines issued on May 20, 2020.
- Support designating grocery, retail, warehouse, food production and food delivery workers as “first responders,” so that they receive immediate access to coronavirus testing, priority access to childcare, and grants from the federal stimulus bill.

ENVIRONMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Enforce federal and state environmental regulations, and strengthen state-level protections.
- Put an end to fast track permitting.
- Accelerate efforts to clean up toxic waste sites, with strict environmental standards, with climate impacts factored into strategic planning. Account for vulnerability to wildfires, hurricanes and sea level rise in site remediation plans.
- Require polluters to pay for environmental damage.



FULLY FUND & ELECTRIFY THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR

State investment in electric vehicle infrastructure and mass transit can push New Jersey to the front of the pack on air quality and emission reductions. The 2019 draft of New Jersey's Energy Master Plan prioritizes the electrification of transportation.

By investing in the electric vehicle industry, still relatively new on the East Coast, New Jersey could be the benefactor of thousands of good, family-sustaining jobs that will be necessary to support an electrified transit system.

Renewed support for mass transit built to make transportation more accessible and affordable for all New Jerseyans, especially our most marginalized communities, will leap our state ahead of the rest of the nation.

RESCUE NJ TRANSIT:

Undoubtedly, the most urgent crisis is the need to bail out NJ Transit, which was already facing an underfunded and undercapitalized transit system, which continued to suffer from a generation of underinvestment. We need to keep our public transportation systems running. Essential workers need public transportation right now in order to serve our communities. When it generally becomes safe for more regular travel, the rest of us will also need public transportation again. With that in mind, we must provide clean travel options and prevent a flood of cars from returning to our streets.

This imperative is complicated by the fact that many transit agencies are in financial jeopardy. During the last recession, numerous agencies, including NJ Transit, were forced to slash service, some of which never returned. The federal government has already helped with \$25 billion to keep transit running during the pandemic, with \$1.4 billion dedicated to NJ Transit, with undoubtedly more funding required to keep NJ Transit solvent. (NJ Transit has requested an additional \$1.2 billion from Congress, which it desperately needs) We should be increasing investments to expand and upgrade public transit, passenger rail, and pedestrian and biking infrastructure to increase jobs and expand clean, accessible mobility. Every \$1 billion invested in public transit creates more than 50,000 jobs and economic returns of \$3.7 billion over 20 years.



INVEST IN THE ADOPTION OF ELECTRIC TRUCKS:

One of the things the COVID-19 crisis has made clear is how heavily Americans depend on the shipping industry. Heavy-duty vehicles make up only 5 percent of all vehicles on the road in the United States but emit 45 percent of the U.S. transportation sector's nitrogen oxide (NOx) pollution, 57 percent of its fine particulate matter pollution, and 25 percent of global warming emissions in the transportation sector. This exhaust disproportionately affects the health of people of color and low-income communities due to proximity to heavy vehicular and port traffic as well as trucking corridors. Electric trucks do not emit any NOx, PM2.5, or GHG pollution during vehicle operation. Meanwhile, sales of electric-drive medium and heavy-duty vehicles globally (excluding China) are expected to increase by a compound annual growth rate of nearly 17% between 2018 and 2030. U.S. companies and workers can benefit greatly in this market, and we can significantly improve public health with adoption of these vehicles in our communities, but only with early market assistance.

We recommend that a purchase incentive be put in place for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles to speed the transition to adoption and manufacturing of cleaner trucks. The point of sale voucher model at the state and local level has been shown to be successful in efficiently deploying zero-emission trucks and buses among fleet operators, purchasers, and dealers.

INVEST IN THE ADOPTION OF ELECTRIC BUSES FOR TRANSIT SCHOOL BUS FLEETS AS PART OF THE EV BILL IMPLEMENTATION:

A switch to zero emission school and transit buses presents a critical opportunity to create jobs, slash pollution harmful to our health, reduce oil use, and reduce greenhouse gases to mitigate climate change. Electrifying transit and school buses will not only boost the nascent electric bus industry, it will eliminate air pollution from these vehicles along their fixed routes, thus protecting the health of the drivers, riders, and people who live along the routes. Low-income residents and communities of color disproportionately rely on public transit buses and live in neighborhoods where dirty exhaust worsens public health. An electric transit bus will save about 47 kg of NOx per year compared to a diesel bus and will emit 78 metric tons less of GHG per year than a conventional diesel bus. Additionally, an electric transit bus can achieve the equivalent of 25 mpg, as compared to 5 mpg for a conventional diesel hybrid bus, which can save up to \$50,000 annually in fuel and maintenance costs. Meanwhile, according to a recent study, U.S. investment in electric transit buses alone could lead to upwards of nearly 8,000 job-years through 2030 with an economic output increase of \$2.5 billion over a 15-year period. However, this young industry requires public investment to accelerate its growth and reach economies of scale.



INVEST IN ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE:

Building out public EV charging infrastructure will dramatically increase the number of people who are willing to purchase an EV. Using electricity to fuel vehicles is cleaner, can make the grid more efficient, and will save consumers money. EVs also provide savings in fuel and maintenance costs for drivers and installing EV charging stations provide good paying electrical jobs. For example, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) estimates that installing about 500,000 charging stations in California alone will result in over 5,000 full time jobs. In addition, New Jersey should encourage the use of domestically manufactured equipment, which will result in more domestic manufacturing jobs. Additionally, significant EV charging infrastructure is needed for transit buses, port vehicles, ride-share vehicles, and corporate and government fleets of light-, medium-, and heavy-duty vehicles.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Fully advocate for the full federal recovery funding for NJ Transit of an additional \$1.2 billion from Congress. NJ Transit, even as reopening fully begins, is bleeding money as there is a challenge to create a social distancing appropriate experience on public transit. It is difficult to have the mass in mass transit with social distancing. NJ Transit still needs to spend \$10 million on increased disinfection per month, and ridership is still off 80% of traditional ridership, which means a loss of more than \$70 million a month. NJ Transit desperately needs federal dollars.
- Create a dedicated source of funding for NJ Transit which will provide ongoing funding for NJ Transit's capital and operating needs to be able to provide the funding necessary to fix NJ Transit's massive unfunded capital needs, some of which were outlined in the recently released NJ Transit Capital Plan. The NJTA Capital Plan will provide massive new funding infusions for highways, \$16 billion for highway expansions across the state, and we need to increase the historical funding for NJ Transit via transfers from the NJTA. The proposed spending on highway expansions should be paused with more funds going to road repair and public transportation and until a further review of climate impacts and post-COVID-19 transportation needs. This would create more jobs and be consistent with the Administration's climate, clean energy and environmental justice goals.
- Ensure funding needs are not met with fare increases so that riders do not shoulder an additional financial burden in the midst of widespread economic hardship. NJ Transit should not raise fares or balance the NJ Transit budget on the backs of transit riders who pay more per capita than nearly every other major transit agency and have already suffered historic fare increases during the Christie Administration.
- Electrify the NJ Transit system, beginning with the full funding for electrification of NJ Transit bus pilots and future bus purchases, watchdog the rollout of the Camden bus pilot to ensure it launches in 2021 and to advocate for funding either through NJBPU PSEG and ACE EV utility filings or NJ Transit's capital funding, as well as electrification of school bus fleets as part of Vehicle To Grid electric grid modernization.
- Invest in the adoption of electric trucks via the electrification of the medium and heavy duty vehicle sector via the annual RGGI auction investments of more than \$60 million and the VW Settlement second tranche of funding close to \$40 million. These investments should prioritize public sector electrification projects, focused on environmental justice communities.
- Expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure and prioritize urban areas, to ensure that the mandates of the EV bill are met with a thorough distribution of charging stations across the state, including 400 fast EV chargers on our busiest traveled roads and more than 1,000 Level II EV chargers in downtown communities. Ensure chargers are distributed throughout the state, but put a focus on electric charging stations in our most heavily air polluted communities and counties. Advocate for EV PSEG and ACE utility filings to invest in this charging network.
- Craft a well-structured regional Transportation Climate Initiative program where the revenue from it must unequivocally lead to significant emission reductions in environmental justice communities, while also ensuring that these communities receive the benefits of more transportation options and access to well-paying jobs that come with our state's move to a clean transportation economy.
- Develop and expand electric car-sharing and ride-sharing pilots in urban environmental justice communities that struggle with mobility issues for residents working to get to jobs. Use Trenton as a pilot model for an e-mobility project modeled on successful programs like Blue LA to get VW Settlement funding for electric vehicle charging and leverage private investment for the procurement of the electric vehicles.
- Expand public transit and paratransit service to ensure people of all abilities and from all parts of New Jersey have access to affordable transportation, and to reduce crowding on board.



4

BUILD UP RENEWABLES

COVID-19 has decimated the clean energy industry. Labor Department data show 106,000 clean energy workers lost their jobs in March alone; other projections estimate 500,000 more jobs lost in the following months. Gov. Murphy recently deemed solar installations as essential businesses, but this won't be enough to stop the lack of investment in renewables during the crisis.

The energy efficiency sector alone supports at least 2.38 million U.S. jobs, almost half of which are in the construction industry. By offering incentives that promote clean energy, we can invest in cleaner technology that strengthens our energy sector while simultaneously bolstering an industry in need of aid.

Promoting community solar will bring affordable power to communities hit hard over the past several months by layoffs and sickness, where many people have become unable to afford their utility bills and face electricity shutoffs.

This model of distributed power can also make our energy system more resilient to extreme weather events intensified by climate change.

For decades, we have had the power to harness abundant clean energy from the sun and wind. In 2020, we can do it more efficiently and cheaply than ever before. Yet we're still producing energy in ways that do lasting damage to our environment and our health. Investing in renewables could help lift New Jersey out of economic recession by creating tens of thousands of good, family sustaining jobs—there is no better time than now.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implement the 2018 Clean Energy Act by increasing the use of clean, renewable energy from off-shore wind, solar (grid-supply/utility-scale, community solar and roof-top solar), small hydro and battery storage.
- Move forward with off-shore wind solicitations that will provide certainty for the investment of the off-shore wind supply chain and allow the state to reach its 7500 MW offshore wind goal by 2035.
- Fully invest in the development of the NJ Wind Energy Port, through investments by NJEDA and other parties of up to \$400 million, to move forward with the marshalling and manufacturing port on Artificial Island in Lower Alloways Creek so that construction can move forward in 2021, as well as investments in other offshore wind energy ports across the state, including Paulsboro, and implement efforts to diversify the offshore wind supply chain by NJEDA.
- Pass the Clean Energy Equity Act to reduce energy burdens of 250,000 low-income households or 35% of New Jersey’s low-income population through a combination of solar, storage, and energy efficiency by 2030; Install 400 megawatts of storage, either within single-family homes or at a community level by 2030 in overburdened communities.
- Develop solar or clean energy curriculum and paid workforce training programs that provide training to at least 2,500 individuals from overburdened communities by 2025.
- Allocate \$50 million annually through the Clean Energy Fund and establish the Office of Clean Energy Equity (OCEE).
- Eliminate burdensome requirements of qualifying low-income households for community solar projects.
- Inclusive financing programs. Facilitate inclusive financing options for clean energy improvements, particularly for low- and moderate-income households, such as on-bill financing, or Pay As You Save programs (Many states have already implemented these programs, including in GA, HI, IL, KY, ME, MN, NC, RI and SC.)
- Create or expand revolving loan funds. States can effectively invest in clean energy infrastructure through revolving loan funds, or green banks, which allow limited funds to do more and go further. (Examples already exist in many states including CO, CT, DC, DE, HI, MI, NY, RI.) Low-cost financing facilitates the rapid deployment of clean energy and is particularly needed as private lenders increase scrutiny and pull back from new projects.
- Increase resilience at critical facilities, ensuring equity in deploying resources. Federal and state funding should target updating the energy infrastructure of critical facilities, especially in disadvantaged communities. Priority buildings include hospitals, police and fire stations, elder care facilities, public housing, among others, as they are the bedrock of public safety. Deploying resilient clean energy options (for example, solar paired with storage) will enable these facilities to remain fully operational during future disasters. This is critically needed in under-served and environmental justice communities.
- Address workforce barriers for vulnerable populations. Modernize workforce development policies to offer wrap-around services that support training, especially for those who face barriers to employment. Addressing barriers like housing, childcare, transportation and internet access serves the most vulnerable, and widens and diversifies applicant pools.



BUY AMERICAN

As Jobs to Move America puts it, “Every year, federal, state, and local governments spend nearly \$2 trillion of our public tax dollars to purchase goods and services—everything from buses and bridges to hard hats and paper clips...

Imagine if our trillions of dollars went even further. Imagine if every dollar spent on public purchasing also created good jobs in communities that need them most. Imagine if our public dollars also tackled racial and socio-economic injustices, countered climate change, and helped build community power.”

Buy American policies work not only to grow American manufacturing and the number of quality, family-sustaining jobs in this country, but also to better use tax dollars and improve the environmental outcomes of major infrastructure projects. When we invest public money, we should ensure there are procurement provisions in place to prioritize buying American products. When products are made in the U.S., we can be confident that they are meeting environmental and labor standards.

Investing in domestic and regional manufacturing will stimulate our economic recovery while building resilience to future health, economic and climate shocks.

Investing in domestic and regional manufacturing also builds resilience to future health, economic and climate calamities. Prioritizing in-state manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, ventilators and other medical equipment will ensure that the best possible protection is available to every New Jersey worker and citizen in the case of another pandemic—an event made more likely by climate change. In addition to protecting our state from the impacts of climate change, a transition to clean energy and infrastructure could play a major role in our economic recovery by creating thousands of manufacturing jobs. The Sierra Club’s recent report *Millions of Good Jobs: A Plan for Economic Renewal* outlines a proposal for clean energy and infrastructure manufacturing that would create over 287,000 good jobs nationally.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Review all procurement made by state contracting agencies to include Buy American provisions.
- Create specific procurement provisions for American-made clean energy and clean transportation goods, including components for rail and other public transit, efficient materials and appliances for public buildings, electric car parts for government fleets, and components for publicly owned renewable energy production and storage. Ensure that procurement policies follow the guidelines of the U.S. Employment Plan.
- Develop a local supply chain, including wind energy component manufacturing hubs across the state, to connect to the recently announced NJ Wind Port.
- Increase funding for grants and incentives that support clean energy manufacturing.
- Support domestic manufacturing.



DEVELOP A GREEN WORKFORCE

Green job training offers high-quality job opportunities for both unemployed and incumbent workers who, in turn, improve the environment and economy in their immediate communities.

Jobs in the renewable energy sector are stable and well-paying with average wages nearly \$5,000 more than the national median. They are also accessible to people with varied educational backgrounds; half of those employed in the industry do not have a bachelor's degree.

The widespread need for energy efficiency upgrades and environmental cleanup in New Jersey's residential and commercial buildings, along with accelerated deployment and servicing of renewable energy systems, create an opportunity for workforce development at all income levels across the state. Energy efficiency training offers major employment opportunities in the lighting and electrical sectors, weatherization, home and business energy audits, and new technology development. Renewable energy related job training offers opportunities in solar array installation and wind turbine manufacturing, installation, and servicing.

Many energy updates cannot be made in homes with substandard conditions like leaky roofs, broken windows, lead contamination or pests. Using the standards of the Building Performance Institute (BPI) to certify training centers along with improving funding and opportunities for job training in energy efficiency and environmental health will offer major savings for low-income families, better community health, and family-sustaining jobs.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Invest \$10 million in job training programs statewide, including union apprenticeship programs, entrepreneurship training, and community-based training centers to equip under- and unemployed workers with skills for jobs in a clean energy economy. Improved access for women and people of color to career pathways within the green economy should be a major policy goal. This is especially urgent because the requirements to meet the energy efficiency mandated reductions in the Clean Energy Act of 2018 will create the demand for thousands of jobs and need a trained workforce by summer 2021.
- Revive the state incentive program for hiring. In 2013, New Jersey ended its state incentive program that offered funding for companies to hire graduates of green job training programs. Reinstating the incentive program to pay up to 50% of new hires' wages for 6 months for companies who create new, full-time jobs that last at least one year, hire trainees from state approved training programs, and deliver an energy efficiency or green energy product or service.
- Allow full home retrofits or “deep retrofits.” Current policy prohibits many energy upgrades from being made in homes with substandard conditions like leaky roofs, broken windows, lead contaminants, or pests.
- Incentivize state training programs for green building operations, maintenance and cleaning for new and incumbent workers.
- Create community service programs modeled after the Civilian Conservation Corps that pays young people a living wage and offer tuition scholarships and/or additional job training in exchange for work in the following areas: COVID-19 tracking and public health, ecological restoration, regenerative farming and food access, education, childcare and elder care, energy efficiency, direct service and community organizing.

7

RENEW GREEN AND EFFICIENT BUILDINGS

As many families have become unable to afford their utility bills over the last three months, the imperative to invest in weatherization and energy efficiency is even stronger.

Energy efficiency and other green building improvements are critical to meeting carbon emissions reduction goals and reducing COVID-19-exacerbating air pollution—and are at the same time a largely untapped source of local, accessible, family-sustaining jobs.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Implement robust energy efficiency programs to hit the mandates of the 2018 Clean Energy Act for reductions of energy use by 2% annually for electric utilities and .75% for gas, clarified in the 2020 Energy Efficiency Transition Program.
- NJBPU should implement energy efficiency programs on an expedited basis, where possible, by starting worker training and identifying projects to help to create new sustainable jobs and aid small businesses still recovering.
- End the annual state budgetary practice of raiding the Clean Energy Fund to balance state budgets so that the fund can be instead invested in its intended purposes.
- Improve green building standards for new and existing construction.
- Resource local building departments to implement energy efficiency standards and incentivize up-to-code improvements for buildings designed and built to lower standards.
- Dedicate funding to fixing homes with health, safety, or structural issues so that all residents can participate in State Energy Programs (Comfort Partners or Weatherization Assistance Program).
- Create a clearinghouse of state department and agency representatives using the “whole house” concept to oversee and coordinate state all health, safety, and energy programs to more effectively improve housing conditions.
- Fast track heat pump installation and electrification items in the Energy Master Plan.
- Fast track the engagement with stakeholders and the development of the Building Electrification road map in order to get started on the work to decarbonize New Jersey’s building stock.
- Fast track the development and execution of an energy code compliance baseline study as proposed in the 2020 Energy Efficiency Transition Program to identify concrete steps to get started on the work to decarbonize New Jersey’s building stock.
- Work with labor unions and industry stakeholders to ensure the transition of New Jersey’s buildings creates good family sustaining jobs, and partner with the Workforce Development Working Group.
- Identify programs, like the installation of heat pumps proposed in the EMP, that can be ramped up to create good jobs immediately. These programs should also use an environmental justice filter to ensure that technology is going to the communities that need it the most.
- Implement more effective C-PACE legislation to spur private low-cost funding for small businesses and multifamily energy efficiency and renewable energy projects throughout the state as these upgrades will lower electric costs and improve building conditions.
- Prioritize the creation of a Green Fund that focuses on innovative and first-of-its kind programs to develop environmental justice and LMI community small business programs that bring together energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, lowering costs and improving the health of the community.



8

RESTORE HEALTHY HOMES FOR ALL NEW JERSEYANS

While many of us are privileged to be able to shelter in place during this quarantine, staying indoors isn't safe for everyone, and can actually exacerbate health problems. Poor housing conditions such as mold and broken heating and plumbing disproportionately burden low-income communities and communities of color. In northern New Jersey alone, 56,000 housing units are severely distressed, putting families at an increased risk of a range of health issues, including asthma, physical injuries, depression, allergic reactions, cancer, and even death.

Lead paint, lead service lines and plumbing are particularly dangerous legacies in New Jersey's oldest housing. About 77% of housing units in New Jersey were built before 1978, the year a federal regulation went into effect requiring that lead be removed from new paint, and in 2019, 104 New Jersey water systems reported having lead service lines for some portion of their customers.

The real imperative for lead and other hazard remediation is a moral one—protecting the lives and futures of the twelve children being poisoned by lead in New Jersey every day and the hundreds of thousands of New Jersey families currently sheltering-in-place in toxic living conditions.”

Lead is a known neurotoxin—a poison—that can damage the developing brains of young children. Chronic exposure over a lifetime is associated with heart disease, anemia, kidney disease, infertility and cancer. Each year, more than 4,800 children in New Jersey are diagnosed with high blood lead levels for the first time, and up to 50% of current students in Trenton Public Schools have blood lead levels (2.5 ug/dl +) that affect their learning and behavior. In 2015, thirteen New Jersey cities had a higher percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels than Flint, MI. Our homes are not safe places to live.

The resources exist and a workforce is ready to be trained to address lead hazards in homes. Returning homes and communities to their natural state involves mitigating lead paint with national best practice lead hazard control and replacing lead services lines and all lead plumbing (and using effective filters in the near-term).

In addition to protecting the health of workers and communities, this renewal is a significant opportunity to create quality jobs, reduce carbon and methane emissions, and build a stronger, more resilient system to buffer the effects of climate change. Simply accessing and using the Lead Hazard Control Assistance Fund (LHCA) for its intended purpose will pay for the vast majority of this effort, and the remainder could be covered by braiding all sources of funding, including untapped federal funds and new sources like RGGI and Opportunity Zone funds. Once mitigated, New Jersey homes are forever safe from this dangerous toxin.

Researchers claim that anywhere between \$17 and \$50 could be saved, in taxes alone, for each \$1 spent on lead safe repairs, and the NJ Department of the Public Advocate estimated future savings from avoiding lead exposures to be \$27 billion statewide. Studies have shown that the ROI for making properties lead-safe was an average of 160 percent! Nevertheless, the real imperative for lead and other hazard remediation is a moral one—protecting the lives and futures of the twelve children being poisoned by lead in New Jersey every day and the hundreds of thousands of New Jersey families currently sheltering-in-place in toxic living conditions.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Mitigate the lead paint hazards in all homes with comprehensive lead hazard control.
- Replace the lead water pipes and plumbing that service our homes and schools.
- Enforce laws that require disclosure when renting or selling housing with possible or known lead contamination.
- Train and staff up the Lead Workforce and ensure local hiring.
- Invest in hydroponic/vertical farming to promote food security, specifically in lower-income communities.
- Enact a full moratorium upon all home and rental housing evictions, electricity and water shutoffs, and suspensions of phone and internet services for the duration of future quarantines plus three months after restrictions on public movement are fully lifted and resume pre-pandemic normalcy, to allow those economically impacted by quarantine time to recover and either resume previous employment or find new employment to afford living expenses again.





REPAIR OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

State investment in infrastructure can create family sustaining union jobs and help put New Jersey on the road to economic recovery. The condition of New Jersey's infrastructure impacts the economy's ability to function and thrive.

In fact, analysis of the ARRA stimulus to recover from the 2008 Great Recession found repairing existing roads and bridges and expanding mass transit created more jobs than new construction (which include highway widenings).

We also need to address existing distribution pipelines that leak methane—a significant source of greenhouse gas. New Jersey is the economic hub for commerce for the country due to the location of the Port of New York New Jersey, the busiest port on the East Coast. Commerce requires well-maintained roads, railroads, airports, and ports so that manufacturers can obtain raw materials and parts and deliver finished products to consumers.

Communities need well-functioning water and sewer systems. New Jersey needs to take a holistic approach to addressing lead from aging service lines that leaches into our drinking water. In 2019, New Jersey reported 160,000 of the potentially toxic pipes at homes, businesses and schools as part of the State's efforts to put together a comprehensive lead inventory. We must continue to prioritize taking steps to make our drinking water lead free.

In addition, every school day in New Jersey, children, teachers and school staff face conditions that can cause illness or injury and that make it harder to teach and to learn. On average, New Jersey's 2,500 school buildings are 50 years old and are four times more densely populated than office buildings. Age, overcrowding, and deferred maintenance strain ventilation, heating, plumbing, electrical systems, and waste energy. Students and staff in many schools are exposed to mold and other indoor air pollutants, triggering asthma attacks and absences due to illness. More than 20% of schools report conditions defined as “so potentially hazardous that they cause an imminent peril to the health and safety of students or staff.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Repair and upgrade existing natural gas distribution pipeline systems to reduce methane leakage.
- Ensure municipal compliance with the long term control plan required by the Clean Water Act for both gray and green infrastructure (stormwater management/combined sewer overflow) including but not limited to pervious pavement, rain gardens, green roofs, planted swales, etc.
- Focus on repairing existing roads and bridges and improving mass transit, not unnecessary highway widenings.
- Remove or mitigate sources of lead that contaminate water, including lead service lines.
- Repair and, when necessary, rebuild schools to provide healthy, safe and modernized facilities for all New Jersey students.
- Invest in cost-effective measures to mitigate sea level rise that are environmentally friendly and do not cause harm to adjacent communities





10 INVEST PUBLIC MONEY IN THE PUBLIC GOOD

Public dollars need to be invested in projects that create the most public good. This could include projects like building schools, repairing roads, investing in public transportation. We know the economic impact of COVID-19 has been devastating, upwards of a \$10 billion shortage for the New Jersey state budget—and it is critical that, as too often happens in moments of economic crisis, budget restrictions do not fall on the backs of those already hardest hit by the pandemic. A public bank could help bring in new revenue for New Jersey.

For example, in 2016, the state and municipalities of New Jersey paid more than \$1 billion in fees and \$3 billion in interest to Wall Street for debt service. Payment of these debt costs are typically prioritized over meeting the public purpose for which they were borrowed.

A state bank would enable the public to take more efficient and productive control of the state's money, realize the same leveraging power of all banks, save significant sums by self-financing, and create a new source of revenue from lending/investing in state interests and objectives. This cycle of money would reverse upward trends for state debt and taxes that extract public wealth, and properly redirect state resources toward public interests.

It is critical that budget restrictions do not fall on the backs of those already hardest hit by the pandemic, as too often happens in moments of economic crisis. A public bank would enable the public to take control of the state's money.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish a public bank without delay.
- Use bonding to ensure the state has the capital it needs to provide basic essential services and fully staff all state agencies and public services.
- Raise new revenue in an equitable and sustainable manner that centers anti-racist values and poor communities during the recovery. Revenue raisers should include reforming the millionaire's tax, an estate tax and corporate business taxation policies, as well as consideration of other equitable revenue sources. The state should, by any means, avoid cutting more of New Jersey's public services and assets, on the backs of our poor and working class residents, to balance its budget.
- Establish the Green Fund as a standalone non-profit entity to protect funding and allow for innovation in program design and implementation and use the allocated RGGI funds to drive robust private investment in projects that prioritize social impact and clean energy investment.
- Conduct an analysis of required staffing levels to ensure all NJ Departments can carry out their missions.



CONCLUSION

The image of the COVID-19 public health response—overwhelmed doctors and nurses—is still haunting but there’s another public health story that COVID-19 can tell us. The reduction in energy use and driving from our response to COVID-19 has cleared up our skies. Research from the Harvard University School of Public Health shows that clearer skies have a clear public health benefit and reduce an obvious vector of transmission of COVID-19. People with COVID-19 who live in U.S. regions with high levels of air pollution are more likely to die from the disease than people who live in less polluted areas, according to a new nationwide study from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The Harvard study is the first to look at the link between long-term exposure to fine particulate air pollution (PM2.5)—generated largely from fuel combustion from cars, refineries, and power plants—and the risk of death from COVID-19 in the U.S. The study found, for example, that someone who lives for decades in a county with high levels of fine particulate pollution is 8%* more likely to die from COVID-19 than someone who lives in a region that has just one unit (one microgram per cubic meter) less of such pollution.

The study looked at more than 3,000 counties across the country, comparing levels of fine particulate air pollution with coronavirus death counts for each area. Adjusting for population size, hospital beds, number of people tested for COVID-19, weather, and socioeconomic and behavioral variables such as obesity and smoking, the researchers found that a small increase in long-term exposure to PM2.5 leads to a large increase in the COVID-19 death rate. The study suggests that counties with higher pollution levels “will be the ones that have higher numbers of hospitalizations, higher numbers of deaths and where many of the resources should be concentrated,” said senior study author Francesca Dominici, Clarence James Gamble Professor of Biostatistics, Population, and Data Science at Harvard Chan School.

As we begin our re-opening process in New Jersey, even though the pandemic still lives with us, it is critical to remember why certain members of our state population were more vulnerable than others. Air pollution, which has become the background noise of New Jersey’s environment, became a clear vector for the virus and there is a chilling connection between communities of higher pollutant levels in New Jersey and the prevalence of COVID-19 cases. As we start the recovery process fully, we need to rebuild a state economy that helps all of us, especially the most vulnerable and create a vision for what a just and green economic recovery can be.

CONTRIBUTORS

This report was made possible through the contributions of the following organizations and individuals.

Organizations:

- Banking On New Jersey
- BlueWaveNJ
- Business Network for Off-Shore Wind
- CATA
- Clean Water Action New Jersey*
- Energy Efficiency Alliance of New Jersey
- Environment New Jersey*
- GreenFaith*
- Health Professionals and Allied Employees*
- Isles Inc.*
- Make the Road NJ
- New Labor*
- National Council for Occupational Safety and Health
- New Jersey Public Interest Research Group (NJPIRG)
- Service Employees International Union 32 BJ*
- Sierra Club - New Jersey Chapter*
- Tri-State Transportation Campaign
- United Steelworkers (USW) District 4*
- Vote Solar
- Work Environment Council of New Jersey, Inc.*

** Denotes Jersey Renews Steering Committee Member.*

Note Christine Clarke also contributed to these recommendations as a member of the Steering Committee.

