

## 2017 NJ GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

### Where the Candidates Stand on Helping Children in Poverty

**Question:** New Jersey ranks among the wealthiest states in median family income, but year after year, roughly 30 percent of the state's children live in low-income families (below 200 percent of the federal poverty threshold or earning no more than \$48,000 annually for a family of four). For black and Hispanic children in low-income families, that percentage climbs to more than 50 percent. New Jersey is an expensive state to live in with high housing costs that strain family budgets, especially for those who are at an economic disadvantage.

**If elected, what steps will you take to address the needs of New Jersey children living in low-income families struggling to make ends meet?**

#### *Kim Guadagno, Republican Candidate*

As a mother of three, I will fight for all children in New Jersey as governor and work to make our state more affordable for families. First, I will lower property taxes during my first term in office or I won't run for a second. My plan specifically helps low to middle-income families who are struggling to pay their bills by capping school taxes at 5% of household income. This will save families up to \$3,000 a year and ensure that families won't be forced to choose between paying their taxes or putting food on their table.

Second, I will expand school choice. Children in every neighborhood of this state deserve the school program that best fits with their individual needs and life ambitions. Every child has a dream of what they want to accomplish in life and it is our job to give them the best chance to achieve those dreams. However, for thousands of school children in New Jersey, that educational opportunity does not exist. We can provide it to them if we give these students and their parents choices. Right now, those choices don't exist and these kids are stuck attending a poor performing neighborhood school that will ill prepare them for the challenges of college and careers.

Third, I will expand the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program to all families in underserved areas. As the head of the red tape commission, I worked hard to expand the WIC program but as governor, we will lift any obstacle to providing our children a healthy diet. Also, Breakfast at the Bell and farm to school programs will be maintained or expanded.

I will also work to make charitable contributions to New Jersey charities tax deductible so that the nonprofit sector can become a stronger partner as we work to strengthen New Jersey communities.

#### *Phil Murphy, Democratic Candidate*

As someone who grew up in a family that was working poor, this issue isn't abstract to me – I have lived it. If elected Governor, I will build a stronger, fairer economy in New Jersey that will ensure that all children have an opportunity to succeed. That starts with raising the minimum wage, providing earned sick leave for all, and guaranteeing equal pay for equal work to ease the burden of child care for working families. I will also create a child and dependent care tax credit, as described earlier, and expand the earned income tax credit. And I believe that we must address the crisis of housing

affordability by limiting the practice of diverting money from affordable housing funds, and ensuring that low-income families receive the maximum amount of federal funding possible under crucial programs such as SNAP – both of which are things that the Christie-Guadagno administration has failed to do.

**Seth Kaper-Dale, Green Party Candidate**

The key policy that I bring to low-income families, that could change their financial reality, is Medicare for All. Some wonder how this is so, since low-income people are already eligible for Medicaid—but that is to miss the point entirely. If we move to NJ Medicare for All the state of NJ will experience a level of economic freedom it hasn't experienced in years. This will be good for low-income people in particular.

Our municipalities are cash strapped largely because of the for-profit insurance industry that keeps jacking up the price of health insurance. If we move to a single-payer Medicare model this is what happens financially that will help low-income people.

Work will no longer be connected to health insurance. Therefore businesses can employ someone 40hrs a week, instead of cutting them off at 'part time' so as to avoid a costly health insurance plan. Businesses, now with a clear understanding of what they are contributing toward NJ Medicare for All (6% employer tax, as opposed to the approximately 13% they pay now to insurance plans) will be able to raise minimum wage. We can get to \$15.00/hr if we relieve businesses of unregulated insurance plans. Municipal budgets, that currently see 20% of their budget going to health insurance plans, will pay significantly less, and that will lower property taxes. Higher education, currently so expensive largely because of health insurance plans of employees, will go down for students. Workers in small businesses in local communities that are too small to offer insurance, would be more stable in their employment, because they wouldn't leave for 'jobs with health insurance.' Finally, a person would not be tied to a job because of health insurance. Currently lots of people stay in work they do not feel called to because they need the benefits. Let's disconnect the benefit of health insurance from particular work. They do not belong together.

Secondly, a major driver of poverty in NJ is prison. With so little economic opportunity in many urban centers prison becomes a reality for families—and families with a breadwinner away are families that struggle financially. I believe that while individuals are locked up they should be able to make a decent minimum wage. The state should give opportunity for those imprisoned to start jobs on the inside that can continue on the outside. Parents should be able to pay child support while locked up—participating in their family economy.

Thirdly, all residents of NJ, regardless of immigration status, should be able to drive if they are of legal age. If we care about children thriving we need to have parents working. A driver's license is a key to job prospects in NJ.

Fourthly, NJ dramatically needs to increase its rental assistance. In 2008 there was \$47 million in the SRAP funds. Now, there is \$40 million. Rents go up but subsidies in the budget go down. We have 438,000 kids living in households that bring in under \$30,000/year. This is truly troubling. We need to increase SRAP funding to at least \$70 million. With the increase in minimum wage, and with more people working 40hrs, and with less out of pocket medical expenses and more preventative care, it is likely that the average subsidized amount for any family will decrease. More economic opportunity means less need for dramatic help. But, until we totally right this ship, SRAP is a necessary thing.

Finally, any town that has not been faithful to its affordable housing requirements should be subject to an SRAP remedy—which will be given to a family with children. If towns are not going to step up and help keep NJ from being an apartheid state of cantons of poverty and wealth then SRAP could help force a level of integration. If every one of NJ's 565 municipalities had been faithful to the Mount Laurel Agreements in the mid-70's children in NJ would be in a much better place today—in terms of housing, education, economics and integration.