

NURTURING HEALTHIER FUTURES: OUR FIRST YEAR OF PROGRESS

### A YEAR OF PROGRESS & PROMISE

### A WORD FROM PRESIDENT & CEO LISA ASARE



As we reflect on the first year of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA)'s accomplishments, I am filled with pride and optimism. This inaugural year marks a significant milestone in our mission to improve maternal and infant health across our state, and we have made strides toward creating lasting, meaningful change.

Under the leadership of Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, we set out with a bold vision: to drive innovation, reduce health disparities, and ensure that every mother and infant in New Jersey has the opportunity to thrive. One year into this journey, we have seen the power of collaboration, the importance of evidence-based solutions, and the impact of community-centered care.

Throughout this year, we have worked tirelessly to build strong partnerships with healthcare providers, community organizations, policymakers, and advocates. We've listened to the voices and lived experiences of those directly affected by health disparities. We are designing and implementing strategies to improve access to care, address social determinants of health, and foster equitable outcomes for all. Our progress in 2024 has been both impactful and encouraging. However, we recognize that this is just the beginning. The challenges facing maternal and infant health are complex, and the road ahead requires continued dedication and innovation.

In the coming year, we are committed to deepening our efforts and pushing the boundaries of what is possible to ensure that every mother and child in New Jersey is supported, empowered, and given the resources needed to thrive. I extend my deepest gratitude to our partners, staff, and all those who have contributed to our work in this first year. Together, we are creating a future where every pregnancy is celebrated, every birth is safe, and every family can flourish.

**Thank you** to all those who made this journey possible and will continue bringing our mission to life for generations to come. I am excited to continue working to build a healthier and more equitable future for all New Jersey families.

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NJMIHIA is required to prepare an annual report no later than one year after the board is appointed and annually thereafter.

## A WORD FROM FIRST LADY TAMMY MURPHY



Dear New Jersey Mothers,

The Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority's (MIHIA) annual report marks the culmination of years of work by countless individuals dedicated to improving maternal and infant health across our state. From advocates, to nurses, to physicians, to doulas, to midwives, and mothers themselves, I offer my sincere thanks for all it has taken to get us to today.

Since 2018, our Administration has worked tirelessly to transform New Jersey into the safest and most equitable state in the nation to deliver and raise a baby through our maternal and infant health initiative, Nurture NJ. Over the past 7-plus years, we have enacted or made headway on over half of the more than 80 recommendations in our strategic plan; become the second state to expand Medicaid

coverage to 365 days postpartum; launched Family Connects NJ, the most robust-in-the-nation universal nurse home visitation program so that every new parent is visited by a nurse in their home for free within weeks after bringing home a new baby; and in March 2024, we established the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority, the first-and-only-of-its-kind in the nation. This new authority ensures that the life-saving work of Nurture NJ will continue long after our administration and permanently make our state a national leader in maternal health. Additionally, MIHIA will oversee a state-of-the-art Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center in Trenton, which we will be breaking ground on this summer. The Center will be an incubator for innovation and development, an academic and perinatal workforce training center, will offer direct social and wraparound supports, host a data collaborative, and offer comprehensive clinical services to serve moms before, during and after pregnancy.

In New Jersey, we respect and cherish women and mothers and the work of MIHIA is a direct expression of those values. I am proud to see this new and unique state government authority reach its first full year of life, and I look forward to watching MIHIA lead the way in maternal and infant health innovation in the years ahead.

My very best,





In July 2023, Gov. Phil Murphy signed into law the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center Act ("Act") establishing the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA). NJMIHIA is the first and only state authority in the nation focused on improving outcomes and addressing disparities in maternal and infant health.

NJMIHIA's enabling legislation tasks it with being at the forefront of serving maternal and infant health care needs for families throughout the state. NJMIHIA is statutorily empowered to develop collaborative partnerships for research and knowledge exchange within the local, state, national and global maternal and infant health landscapes.

Since this innovative authority launched its first board meeting March 2024, the NJMIHIA team has been actively engaged in building its infrastructure while developing plans for the construction of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC) in Trenton and conducting significant outreach to raise awareness of its mission.

NJMIHIA builds on the successes of First Lady Tammy Murphy's Nurture NJ initiative, which seeks to make New Jersey the safest and most equitable place to have a baby and raise a child. By creating NJMIHIA, the Act ensured that Nurture NJ's initiatives will continue long after the Murphy Administration to protect the maternal and infant health of all New NJMIHIA Jersevans. is the statewide coordinating entity responsible for ensuring all mothers in New Jersey have the support they need for a healthy pregnancy and birth.

By ensuring that infant and perinatal care is provided on an equitable basis, NJMIHIA will address racial disparities in maternal and infant mortality rates. This work includes healthcare and social service delivery, research and innovation, perinatal workforce development, as well as education and public awareness efforts. NJMIHIA will make New Jersey the gold standard for maternal health.



NJMIHIA launched at its first Board meeting in March 2024. First Lady Tammy Murphy announced the appointment of Lisa Asare as MIHIA's President and CEO, along with the creation of a cabinet level role supporting maternal and infant health. President & CEO Asare expressed her personal investment in the issue. Board members called for efforts to address systemic racism in healthcare and advocated for comprehensive implicit-bias training. The Authority moved forward with plans to establish the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC) in partnership with The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), which will serve as a hub for innovation, workforce development, provide social services and supports, and implement practices.

## **BOARD CHAIR**



"I am deeply honored to be appointed Chair of the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority Board. I have been fortunate to spend the last 30 years working on addressing health disparities and creating solutions that benefit the most vulnerable residents in our state, and I am committed to continuing this vital work. This role offers an invaluable opportunity to improve maternal and infant health outcomes. I look forward to collaborating with the NJMIHIA Board, a team of dedicated professionals and stakeholders, to implement innovative solutions to ensure that every mother and infant receives the highest standard of care. Together, we will strive to make a significant and lasting impact on the health and well-being of families throughout our state."

Barbara George Johnson Vice President of External Affairs and Urban Policy and Research **Kean University** 

# **BOARD MEMBERS**

### **Public Members**

### Shakira Abdul-Ali

MSOD, Principal Managing Consultant/Owner Alchemy Consulting, LLC Former Director, Trenton Department of Health & Human Services

### **Rosalee Boyer**

First Lady of the Greater Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church Co-founder of Salvation and Social Justice

### Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji

Associate Professor Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Health Rutgers New Jersey Medical School Physician in Obstetrics and Gynecology

### **Barbara George Johnson**

Vice President of External Affairs and Urban Policy and Research Kean University

### Andrea Martinez-Mejia

Executive Director Greater Newark Health Care Coalition

#### Maritza Raimundi-Petroski

Executive Director Vice President Strategic Initiatives, Prevention Programs, and Community Engagement Children's Home Society of New Jersey

### Dr. Philip Bonaparte

President and CEO New Hope Health Center Former Chief Medical Officer and Vice President Horizon NJ Health, a subsidiary of Horizon BCBSNJ

### **Governor's Representatives**

### Sarah Adelman

Commissioner Department of Human Services

#### Dr. Kaitlan Baston

Commissioner Department of Health

### Dr. Brian Bridges

Secretary of Higher Education

### **Holly Low**

Director, Office of Strategic Outreach and Policy Department of Labor and Workforce Development

#### **Katherine Stoehr**

First Deputy Commissioner Department of Children and Families

### Tim Sullivan

Chief Executive Officer Economic Development Authority

### Justin Zimmerman

Commissioner Department of Banking and Insurance

# MATERNAL & INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION CENTER

NJMIHIA is working to establish a Trenton-based Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC) in partnership with with NJEDA, the Office of First Lady Tammy Murphy and the Office of Governor Phil Murphy. NJMIHIA will oversee the day-to-day operations of MIHIC, which will be a hub for innovation, workforce development, social services supports and clinical best practices.

The NJEDA Board approved three anchor tenants to lead the MIHIC in Trenton. These entities, will work collaboratively to provide services focused on addressing a myriad of issues around maternal and infant health in Trenton and across New Jersey, including preand post-natal clinical services; education programs to cultivate the perinatal workforce; and social and wrap-around services.

Ashley Ave.

Ave.

Ashley Ave.

The Trenton community has informed the development of the MIHIC ensuring that it becomes a beacon of hope and change for Trenton, the state, the nation, and ultimately the world. NJMIHIA has worked to foster innovation and support the experience through its partnership with the NJEDA. The continued presence community voice ensures we maintain the perspective of those with lived experience.

NJMIHIA's work to support the building of the MIHIC continues. In December 2024, NJEDA's board approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the Trenton Board of Education and the New Jersey Schools Development Authority to purchase property in downtown Trenton as the future home of the MIHIC, this is a critical step in its establishment.

#### Site Plan

The Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center site is located off Pennington Avenue and Warren Street, situated across from the Battle Monument in Trenton, NJ. This area is widely accessible to Trenton community members.

In 2025, the construction process for the MIHIC will commence. NJMIHIA is working closely with NJEDA and its architects and engineers to expedite this process.

The MIHIC will serve as a hub for a myriad of services, fostering partnerships with experts in innovation, clinical best practices in maternal and infant health, academic institutions, as well as collaborations with philanthropic organizations, businesses, and faith communities.

# A WORD FROM

NJEDA PRESIDENT & CEO TIM SULLIVAN





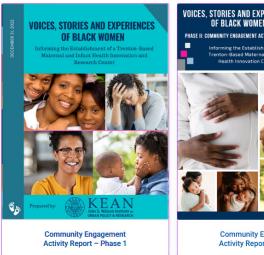
"Under the leadership of Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, the NJEDA and NJMIHIA are working diligently alongside leading professionals in the health, education, and nonprofit sectors to bring critical maternal and infant health services to the City of Trenton. The Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC) will drive new innovations to help eliminate racial barriers and improve health outcomes. The Center is strategically positioned to make a lasting impact on the health and economic wellbeing of the Trenton community for many years to come."

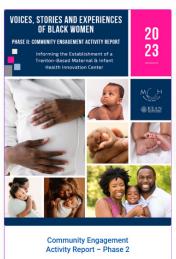
## MATERNAL & INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION CENTER **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

he NJEDA contracts with the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University to lead community engagement inform efforts in Trenton to development of MIHIC.

The intention is to gather feedback from community members on the needs of Trenton residents and ways they would like the MIHIC to respond to those needs. This method community engagement understanding of Trenton's resident experience is invaluable to the design and development of the Center.

Community engagement efforts have been primarily focused on integrating and understanding the lived experience of the targeted Trenton population.





The Watson Institute has facilitated iterative. interactive. and dialogues with Trenton stakeholders and residents since March of 2022. NJMIHIA will continue to incorporate community feedback for the duration of MIHIC construction and beyond.



To date, the John S. Watson Institute has created and distributed a robust totaling 800 recorded survev responses from Trenton community members; tabled at Nurture NJ Family festivals and Trenton events: and held numerous community convening and focus groups throughout the city.

These community events have advised on the MIHIC location and services. Additionally, NJMIHIA has hosted live webinars and meetings to discuss community resources and community engagement.

# MATERNAL & INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION CENTER ANCHOR TENANTS

The MIHIC has five key areas of focus:

- 1. Pre- and post-natal clinical services
- 2. Perinatal workforce education and training
- 3. Social services and wrap around supports
- 4. Policy research and data collaborative
- 5. A maternal and infant health innovation incubator

NJMIHIA has three lead anchor tenants who will offer a variety of services in the MIHIC according to the NJMIHIA model of care. These entities will serve as an academic hub, clinical and social service provider, and innovation hub. The anchor tenants are as follows:

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY** is the lead institution of higher education providing accredited degree-granting programs, certification and non-degree programs, on-the-job training opportunities, student support services - including job search and placement support - and maternal and infant health research.

Rutgers will work as a Higher Education Consortium, composed of five educational institutions including Mercer County Community College, Stockton University, The College of New Jersey, and Thomas Edison State University.

CAPITAL HEALTH is the lead healthcare clinical service provider tasked with providing obstetric and gynecological services, pediatric clinical services, mental and behavioral health services, doula, lactation consultant, community health worker supports, and telehealth services, in support of the NJMIHIA model of care which includes the integration of physial and behavioral care.

TRENTON HEALTH TEAM is the lead Trenton-based multi service organization. It is tasked with providing case management and care coordination; linkages to wrap-around supports; public benefit eligibility screening and enrollment; pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting support.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

# STATE AND PRIVATE FUNDING FOR NJMIHIA

NJMIHIA is uniquely positioned to receive funding from both public (State) appropriations and private contributions, ensuring a strong foundation for its operations. In the FY25 New Jersey State Budget, MIHIA received a \$3.22 million appropriation, providing crucial support to advance its initiatives and strengthen its organizational capacity.

Beyond state funding, MIHIA is actively cultivating opportunities diverse funding through partnerships with foundations and exploring for organizational growth. These avenues initiatives will create a balanced and sustainable funding model, enhancing NJMIHIA's financial flexibility and long-term growth. By leveraging both public and private resources, NJMIHIA can expand its impact, strengthen its programs, and ensure continued success in FY26 and beyond. In line with this, the Governor's Budget Message for FY26 proposes maintaining the \$3.22 million funding level, reaffirming the state's commitment to MIHIA's initiatives.

This week, NJMIHIA received formal notice that its application to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation — a leading national philanthropic organization committed to transforming health through bold initiatives — has been approved for funding. We are thrilled to share this exciting news and grateful for the Foundation's support. The project, titled *Developing NJMIHIA's Blueprint for Maternal and Infant Health Innovation and Action*, will launch in April 2025, strengthening NJMIHIA's efforts to advance health equity in maternal and infant health outcomes across New Jersey.

# STRATEGIC USE OF RESOURCES AND PRIVATE FUNDING EFFORTS

Beyond state appropriations, NJMIHIA is actively working to secure private funding to sustain and operations. expand its By engaging public-private partnerships, NJMIHIA aims to diversify its funding base and reduce long-term reliance on state appropriations. These additional resources will allow NJMIHIA to scale its programs, enhance service delivery, and explore new initiatives that further its mission. The combination of public and private funding strengthens NJMIHIA's ability financially resilient while expanding its impact.

## RESPONSIBLE FUND MANAGEMENT

Through the authority granted by appropriation budget language, MIHIA retains access to unexpended carry-forward funding, ensuring its availability for use in subsequent years. The NJMIHIA Board has demonstrated responsible and proactive stewardship of NJMIHIA funds, regularly convening to monitor performance and approve key resolutions that support the organization's operations. Within the past year, the Board approved measures such as procuring insurance, authorizing the annual fiscal plan, and establishing a service agreement with the Division of Law, ensuring NJMIHIA's continued financial stability and operational effectiveness.

### STEADY GROWTH IN PUBLIC INVESTMENT

The \$3.22 million FY25 appropriation demonstrates the state's growing investment in MIHIA's mission. This funding reflects the organization's programmatic growth and ensures it can sustain and enhance delivery of essential services to the communities it serves.

# NJMIHIA'S FIRST YEAR



Since 2018, First Lady Murphy has hosted annual Nurture NJ Leadership Summits, bringing together national and state experts to discuss and identify solutions to our maternal and infant health crisis and persistent disparities. In December 2024 during the 7th annual Nurture NJ Summit, NJMIHIA debuted as New Jersey's sustainability plan to build on the Nurture successes of NJ with legislators, and state partners. The 2024 summit theme focused on strengthening and diversifying the perinatal workforce.





More than 700 people attended, with the gathering comprising a diverse group of public health professionals, members of the perinatal workforce, and local organizations with a mission to advance actionable changes in the maternal and infant health space.





President & CEO Asare presented NJMIHIA as a new state authority to key maternal health stakeholders. This presentation discussed how NJMIHIA was created to advance and improve maternal and infant health outcomes for New Jersey and become the gold standard for maternal health.



NJMIHIA as part of a partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH), serves as coordinator of the Doula Learning Collaborative (NJDLC). This new role entails organizing, convening, and coordinating doulas statewide to ensure alignment and synergy at the state level.

In this role, NJMIHIA will host a doula convening and outline its plans for collaboration with doulas across New Jersey, unveiling ongoing initiatives supporting doulas in NJ FamilyCare. Through interactive workshops, policy discussions, and networking opportunities, this event aims to strengthen the doula community's ability to deliver innovative, culturally responsive, and sustainable maternal health solutions.

# COMMUNITY BASED DOULA TRAINING INITIATIVE

NJMIHIA is working to develop the perinatal workforce. In October 2024, NJMIHIA collaborated with Rutgers Institute for Families (IFF), the New Jersey Department of Services. New Human Jersey Department of Health, and a diverse doula advisory committee to develop a New Jersey-specific doula curriculum, assessment tool, and facilitation program. Rutgers IFF was contracted as the project lead for Phase I of these efforts to expand a culturally responsive and professional doula workforce aimed at improving perinatal experiences for at-risk New Jersey mothers. NJMIHIA has re-engaged Rutgers and our diverse doula advisory committee to participate in Phase II of this initiative and finalize the NJMIHIA Community-Based Doula Training Initiative.

This expanded workforce will be well-prepared to meet the needs of NJ FamilyCare clients. NJMIHIA is intentionally partnering with community-based doulas to ensure equity in the development of this curriculum and the inclusion of their

lived experience in the process to support the statewide doula Medicaid benefit.

Plans are underway to complete the New Jersey-specific doula curriculum, assessment tool. facilitation program, and marketing and promotional materials by the end of the Murphy administration. This will foster the growth and efficacy of the perinatal workforce as well as aid in the uptake of Medicaid beneficiaries' use of doula services in New Jersey. NJMIHIA aims to have a significant increase in doula provider enrollment by the end of the current Administration.



# MATERNAL CARE QUALITY COLLABORATIVE

he New Jersey Maternal Care Quality Collaborative (MCQC) was established by the New Jersey Department of Health to work with the Governor's office to coordinate efforts and strategies to reduce maternal mortality, morbidity, and racial and ethnic disparities. MCQC was reorganized in 2024 and is now overseen by NJMIHIA. The MCQC is NJMIHIA's strategic thought partner poised to aid in efforts to transform data to action. Quarterly MCQC meetings convene 39 subject matter experts to analyze data on adverse birth outcomes and make evidence-based recommendations of actionable strategies focused on improving maternal morbidity and mortality.

## WORKING TOGETHER FOR MOTHERS & BABIES MOVING FROM DATA TO ACTION

### DATA

Maternal Data Center Hospital Report Card Qualitative Data Emerging Issues

### **ADVISORY**

Maternal Care Quality Collaborative (MCQC)

### **AUTHORITY**

Maternal & Infant Health Innovation Authority (MIHIA)

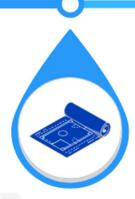
### **ACTION**

Maternal & Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC)











### **FLORIDA**

NJMIHIA attended the Florida Health Policy State Senate Committee Meeting to share New Jersev's efforts to address maternal and infant health disparities. This includes over 70 of maternal pieces health legislation, including the Medicaid Doula benefit, the universal nurse visitation program, expansion of paid family leave and the maternal health report card.

### WASHINGTON, DC

NJMIHIA attended the Health Connect One Community-Based Doula Organization Winter Convening. This convening united community-based organizations, funders, and policymakers to share strategies to develop a robust doula workforce.

# A NATIONAL LEADER

NJMIHIA is at the forefront of maternal and infant health care for families across New Jersey and the nation. New Jersey's innovative maternal care model serves as a national example to foster collaborative partnerships for research and the exchange of best practices to advance the field.



### **NORTH CAROLINA**

NJMIHIA presented an overview of its progress and goals at Nurture North Carolina Steering Committee meetings. The state named its statewide initiative Nurture NC, funded by philanthropy with the goal to create a sustainable public-private entity dedicated to improving maternal and infant health outcomes and reduce health disparities.

# HONOR & AWARENESS

### MATERNAL HEALTH AWARENESS DAY

NJMIHIA participated in a roundtable hosted by the First Lady in recognition of Maternal Health Awareness Day on January 23, 2025. This event convened CEOs and OBGYN chairs from New Jersey's labor and delivery hospitals. All 46 hospitals signed a pledge committing to implementing various maternal and infant health best practices, including patient safety bundles of evidence-informed care strategies, shared decision-making and team-based care.

NJMIHIA also joined a ribbon cutting event for the Cooper-Camden Baby Café in Camden, NJ. This was the grand opening of New Jersey's first Baby Café launched by Cooper Medical School of Rowan University at a public library. The Nurture NJ Strategic Plan supports the café model to provide breastfeeding support in communities for families and support teams. This baby café provides free lactation support to new mothers and families.





## **FEBRUARY**

In recognition of Black History Month, NJMIHIA was invited and spoke on a panel hosted by Salvation and Social Justice clergy focusing on Black Maternal Health. It was hosted at Mt. Zion AME Church in Trenton.

NJMIHIA provided an overview of the Authority and the Center it will oversee in Trenton, acknowledging the role that communities of color play in driving innovation and positive change.

NJMIHIA also presented to the Policy Task Force class at Princeton University's School of Public and International Affairs. The semester's focus was advancing birth equity in New Jersey.

# **OPERATIONS** NJMIHIA STAFF



Lisa Asare President & CEO



**Sofia Bonsignore** 



**Eric Carlsson** Governor's Fellow Chief Financial Officer



**Cindy Cortez** Administrative **Assistant** 



Myrna Rivera **Agency Management** Analyst



**Pamela Taylor** Senior Advisor



**Catherine Terrero** Senior Executive **Assistant** 



Laura Wilton Chief of Corporate Governance

Since its inception in March 2024, MIHIA has focused on laying the foundation for executing the Authority's mission, vision, and goals. This includes staffing of the NJMIHIA team, reorganizing the NJMCQC under NJMIHIA, as well as, establishment of an Audit Committee and working groups to assist and advise the MIHIA Board. Strategic communication included the establishment of NJMIHIA logo, branding and social media presence, and creating a foundation for this one-of-a-kind authority to function and thrive.

Collaborating with the First Lady's office, NJMIHIA successfully created a comprehensive and innovative brand kit, including a strategically-curated visual identity and establishment of social media handles to enhance the Authority's online presence. This partnership marked a significant milestone in NJMIHIA's efforts to establish a unique and influential identity.

# OUR FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Throughout NJMIHIA's development of a distinct brand identity, feedback was gathered from stakeholders regarding both NJMIHIA and their vision for the Authority's future.

Below are some of the key quotes shared by stakeholders:

"NJMIHIA can become the interdisciplinary agent of change"

"NJMIHIA has an opportunity to create a new system/structure to achieve health equity and justice for all"

"NJMIHIA is on a mission to change policy in NJ and be a learning model for the world. Creating a brighter future with policies that pave the way for that brighter future"

"Everything NJMIHIA does must be in concert with community and multisector organizations, with community as the conduit"

# LEARN MORE & CONTACT US



225 East State Street, 2nd Floor West Trenton, NJ 08625



nj.gov/njmihia



info@njmihia.gov



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