

Commissioner Carole Johnson on subsidies and funding for childcare in NJ ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

"State of Affairs is pleased to welcome Carole Johnson, the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services. Good to see you Commissioner.

Thank you.

Thanks so much for having me. Make it clear what you're responsible for. That's a huge department. Yes. I'm really honored to be the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services under Governor Murphy. We run the state's Medicaid program, that provides healthcare coverage to 1.7 million New Jerseyans. We provide food assistance to 700,000 New Jerseyans through our SNAP program. We're the child care agency. We're the aging agency. We're the agency for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We're the mental health and substance use disorder agency. So we have a wide range of services.

It's a huge portfolio. Commissioner, do this. Because you mentioned child care. The first... you were with us early on in the Murphy Administration, and we talked about an initiative you're about to see on camera right now, our initiative called Right From the Start NJ, focusing on improving the child care situation, and other related issues for infants and toddlers. We talked about it at the beginning. You are with us now. Since then, just recently, there's a \$54,000,000 in additional funding, that's going toward what as it relates to child care? And how does that relate to this initiative?

Well, thank you. Thank you for the work that you've done on Right From the Start, and for... With a lot of partners and teammates. And all the partners across the state. Those... that work, and our partners across the state, and advocates across the state, have been part of our shared goal of saying that what we need to do is to invest in quality, affordable child care. And it's very rare that you have a policy issue that's really a twofer. And in this instance, investing in good child... quality child care is a twofer. Because the science tells us all about brain development. We need to have quality child care and services for children, but the economics tell us good quality child care is what's going to help families feel safe and comfortable and be in the workforce. And so, too many women are not in the workforce, because they don't have confidence in quality, affordable child care. So this \$54,000,000 goes to? \$54,000,000 goes to families to help them afford quality, affordable child care. So what we've done is raise the rates, basically, that we pay for child care. We provide a subsidy to families who are low, or in moderate, income, to help them afford child care. As you know, child care is a very expensive endeavor. And we want families to be able to shop for, and get, the best, highest quality child care."

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