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NEW JERSEY BLACK MAYORS URGE LEGISLATURE TO REJECT TWO PROPOSALS THAT WOULD DAMAGE CITIES AND INCREASE ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Governor Christie's school funding scheme and the proposal to eliminate the Estate Tax are bullets aimed at the hearts of New Jersey's poor and disadvantaged.

Statement by New Jersey Black Mayors' Alliance for Social Justice Executive Board:

"The growing inequality between the very wealthy and all other Americans is a crisis that is damaging our economy, adding to despair and hopelessness in our cities and threatening the very basis of our democracy. Two proposals before the New Jersey legislature, if enacted, will make this inequity even worse: Governor Christie's school funding scheme and elimination of the Estate Tax. These two proposals are bullets aimed at the hearts of New Jersey's cities and of our poor and disadvantaged.

"Governor Christie's proposal is truly breath-taking in its potential to damage education in New Jersey's urban school districts. If enacted, it would be an enormous step backward from the state's commitment to educational equity for all children. Better schools are essential to expanding opportunity and reviving the economies of New Jersey's cities and the state as a whole, yet under the Governor's proposal, some of our cities would lose more than half of their state education funding.

"High property taxes and the dire circumstances of urban schools have been made worse by the Governor's failure to fund the school aid formula adopted in 2008. Governor Christie denies the reality that children growing up in poor neighborhoods have higher needs and lower access to the basics essential for a healthy learning environment. His proposal would eliminate an unprecedented level of teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, and support programs. It would devastate communities that educate historically under-served populations at risk, including poor children, children who are learning English, and children with disabilities.

"Rather than a serious and well thought-out initiative, it appears to be a cynical not to mention unconstitutional attempt by a Governor who has lost the trust of New Jersey residents to curry favor with Donald Trump and his supporters.

"The plan to eliminate the Estate Tax also increases inequality in our state. It will give approximately 4,000 of New Jersey's wealthiest residents yet another tax break, but does nothing to replenish the Transportation Trust Fund and invest in our crumbling roads, outdated public transit systems, and unsafe bridges.

"Sales tax increases, and the fuel tax is no exception, create hardship for the poorest families. While the legislature seems determined to enact a fuel tax increase to save the Transportation Trust Fund, eliminating the Estate Tax, which affects 4 percent of estates in New Jersey, and pairing it with the fuel tax increase, would unnecessarily take away funds for

vital services needed by working families. It's about time for the legislature to restore balance in our state budget by implementing policies that result in True Tax Fairness for all New Jersey residents."