



Board of County Commissioners

County of Hunterdon
71 Main Street, Building #1
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Flemington, NJ 08822-2900

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: September 27, 2022

Contact: John E. Lanza, Director

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Lanza To Governor: Protect Taxpayers and Public Employees By Reducing Record Health Benefit Premiums Increases Now

In a letter to Governor Phil Murphy, Hunterdon County's Board of Commissioners Director John E. Lanza called on the Governor to consider using the state's \$1 billion federal Covid relief surplus funds and to extend to the local level the negotiated agreement with state public employee unions to reduce the astronomical health benefit premium cost increases projected for Hunterdon County, as well as for all New Jersey counties and municipalities.

Lanza wrote, "These premium hikes will visit financial hardships upon local governments, employee participants, and ultimately property taxpayers. These rate increases would be piled on top of record gas prices and inflationary price spikes on food and other household goods not seen in nearly four decades."

Lanza recommended, "Given the effects of the ongoing pandemic, I would also request that your Administration immediately review using a portion of the reported \$1 billion in federal COVID relief money that the state still has at its disposal to lessen the effects of these rate hikes on local government participants in the State Health Benefits Program."

Governor Murphy recently negotiated an agreement with state public employee unions which will reduce to 3% the projected 20% overall increase in health benefit premium rates. Those negotiated rates have not been extended to county and local governments or their employees.

Lanza asked in his letter, "On behalf of the residents and employees of Hunterdon County and other local government participants, I ask why your Administration did not seek a similar deal on behalf of local government workers?"

County and local health benefit premiums are paid by property taxes through local budgets, with public employees paying up to 30% of the cost.



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Lanza added, "I strongly encourage your Administration to take immediate action, in conjunction with the legislature, to address these budget-busting premium rate hikes that will negatively affect taxpaying and employee families alike during a period of record inflation."

Lanza also forwarded copies of his letter to all state legislators representing Hunterdon County.