



HISPANIC DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION  
of NEW JERSEY  
*Building Bridges to a Better Life*

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## Hispanic Directors Association Announces Support for Corzine's Budget Principles

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The Hispanic Directors Association of New Jersey (HDANJ) today announced its overall support for the principles outlined in Governor Jon Corzine's proposed budget for the 2006-2007 fiscal year, while raising some concerns about the impact of some specific measures.

In his proposed spending plan, Governor Corzine set forth several key principles, which HDANJ endorses, and these include; applying fiscal restraint and tying expenditures to revenue, safeguarding the welfare of New Jersey's most vulnerable citizens even in difficult economic times, rooting out fiscal abuse and corruption and vigorously promoting the state economy by encouraging entrepreneurship.

"A major concern is that our community-based organizations have suffered virtually flat state funding for more than a decade even though we are providing critical services to an ever growing population of youths, seniors and recent immigrants," said Daniel Santo Pietro, Executive Director of HDANJ. "At the same time the state bureaucracy has mushroomed. HDANJ represents 33 community-based non-profit agencies who serve over 700,000 low income people.

"Imagine a New Jersey family trying to live in today's world on the same amount of money they made a decade ago," Santo Pietro continued. HDANJ proposes an immediate \$2 million dollar redirection of monies to strengthen and stabilize existing community programs that serve the rapidly growing Hispanic working poor population.

"We would like to see a more progressive approach to closing the state's revenue gap" Santo Pietro noted. "I believe there has been a sincere effort by Governor Corzine to shield the state's most vulnerable citizens from the harmful impact of the state budget crisis. It is evident the Governor did not take a slash and burn approach towards the budget. HDANJ is particularly watching certain critical programs that are key to providing services to these working families. At this point we can see he took obvious care to hold certain programs harmless, and this must continue."

"The poor in general, including Latinos, will be spared some of the most painful consequences of these budget cuts, and in some areas may benefit from additional funding," Santo Pietro added. The budget includes nearly \$20 million in additional funding for special education programs, \$15 million more in state aid for affordable housing, \$7.5 million more in additional after-school care, \$5 million more for health insurance for children and \$3 million more to assist hunger programs.

Although supportive of these budget initiatives, the Hispanic Directors Association noted several troublesome specifics in the budget, including a proposal to apply means testing to all parents sending their children to extended day preschool in the state's poorest districts so they can be assessed a co-payment. The budget also calls for an increase in the co-payment for Medicaid recipients. "In terms of means testing, we believe the governor's projection of \$30 million in revenue is unrealistic and will burden community organizations that provide these preschool services on an extremely tight budget," Santo Pietro observed. "As for Medicaid recipients they are among the poorest and most ill of our residents. They should not be asked to help balance the budget."

We call on legislators to act expeditiously and to respect the sound principles of the Governor's budget. New Jersey deserves no less.