

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2024

Chair Patty Murray & Vice Chair Susan Collins  
United States Senate  
Committee on Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Vice Chair Collins:

As Congress works to fund the federal government for Fiscal Year 2025, I humbly write to raise my appropriations priorities for the state of New Jersey and our nation. Virtually no congressional committee has a more direct impact on the lives of Americans than the Appropriations Committee, and your bipartisan work as Chair and Vice Chair has set an example for how this body should operate.

While my tenure in this esteemed chamber may be brief, I hope to do my part in championing priorities that I believe matter greatly to the people of New Jersey and the American people as a whole. Acknowledging the challenges to complete our work on the Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations bill, I respectfully submit my home state and national appropriations priorities, asking that they receive due consideration as you continue your vital work.

## **New Jersey Priorities**

### ***Combating the Gun Violence Epidemic – Victims of Crime Act Funding for Violence Intervention Programs***

For far too long, our country has been plagued by a gun violence epidemic. Now is the time to make Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding available for community-based violence intervention programs, which are essential to curtailing gun violence—especially in marginalized communities—and providing services to survivors of gun violence. I strongly support report language clearing roadblocks preventing VOCA funding from being used for community-based violence intervention programs and urge you to appropriate \$200 million to the Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs for that purpose. Evidence increasingly shows violence intervention, street outreach, hospital intervention programs, and mental health care can significantly reduce gun violence. We should pursue all solutions that will reduce gun violence and save American lives.

### ***Preventing Cancer Among our Nation’s Firefighters***

Firefighters risk their lives every day to save fellow Americans, and in doing so they expose themselves to life-threatening carcinogens. Cancer has become the leading cause of death among professional firefighters, claiming 66 percent of those who died in the line of duty between 2002

and 2019. In fact, firefighters face a 9 percent higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and are 14 percent more likely to die from cancer than the general public. I urge you to fund the Firefighter Cancer Registry at \$7.35 million to help us better understand the growing occurrence of cancers among our nation's firefighters. In September, I introduced the FIRE Cancer Act, which helps firefighters access free multi-cancer early detection and preventative tests. This funding request will build on those efforts to ensure those who risk their lives for us every day receive the care they need.

### ***Increased Support for New Jersey's First Responders***

First responders play a critical role in maintaining public health and safety. I respectfully request \$20 million in funding for Union City to construct a consolidated police department to enhance operational efficiency, community engagement, and public safety, and \$5 million for the Township of Verona to construct a combined emergency services complex. These spending requests will help deliver the tools necessary for first responders in New Jersey to protect the public and provide lifesaving services.

### ***Protecting our Judiciary from Threats & Coercion – Implementation of the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act of 2022***

Time is of the essence to implement the Daniel Anderl Judicial Security and Privacy Act, enacted in response to the tragic murder of Daniel Anderl, son of New Jersey District Court Judge Esther Salas. During this time of rampant division, it is more important than ever to protect the judiciary from increasingly dangerous threats. The rule of law—the very foundation of our system of justice—rests on judges making decisions based on the facts and the law without fear of retribution. I urge you to provide \$16.4 million for the Vulnerability Management Program to protect judges and their families from online threats, and to ensure courthouses are safe and secure, and \$10 million for the state and local government grant program authorized in Section 5934(c). Judges can only be fair and independent arbitrators of justice if they are free from threats and intimidation.

### ***Safe Drinking Water for All New Jerseyans***

New Jersey was the first state to set maximum contaminant levels for PFAS, and its limits are among the strictest in the country. However, several communities in the state still struggle to have access to clean water free from lead and PFAS/PFOA. I respectfully request funding of \$10 million for the Township of Mahwah to remove PFAS from drinking water sources, \$10 million for the Township of Lyndhurst to replace lead pipes, and \$8 million for Willingboro Municipal Utilities Authority to remove PFAS/PFOA from drinking water.

## **National Priorities**

### ***Combating the Youth Mental Health Crisis***

America is currently facing a serious mental health epidemic, and no group is affected more than adolescents. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 22 percent of all high school students have considered attempting suicide in the past year. It is critical we fund research and community programs to combat the youth mental health crisis. I respectfully request more funding to create community support networks for youth struggling with mental health. Programs like Youth to Youth Peer Support, School Based Health Centers, and Project AWARE are promising avenues that provide local support without overwhelming community health systems. Additionally, I urge you to fully fund the National Institute of Mental Health at the levels requested by the Biden Administration for Fiscal Year 2025 to thoroughly understand the nature and scope of this mental health crisis facing America's youth.

### ***Humanitarian Aid for Innocent Civilians in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon; Humanitarian Aid for South Sudan***

We are facing a humanitarian and moral crisis of growing proportions in the Middle East region. I recently returned from an official trip to Amman, Jordan to assess humanitarian assistance efforts in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon. Having witnessed firsthand the sheer scale of the crisis, to say that regional response efforts are insufficient is a serious understatement. While the U.S. leverages diplomatic tools to improve regional efforts to aid and protect civilians, we must also robustly fund humanitarian assistance efforts to the people of Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon. That includes restoring our financial support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), virtually the sole provider of aid and services to innocent civilians bearing the brunt of the ongoing conflict.

Per my conversations with UNRWA Deputy Commissioner General Antonia Marie De Meo, in Fiscal Year 2023, UNRWA was funded at \$800 million, nearly half of which was previously provided by the U.S. Government. Since the withdrawal of U.S. support for UNRWA in March of this year, UNRWA has been operating on a severely depleted budget right at the moment that humanitarian needs are ballooning. I urge you to ensure that the United States' support of UNRWA is fully restored at roughly \$400 million in the Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations bills so that we can effectively respond to the growing human toll in the region as a result of this conflict.

As we work to alleviate the horrific humanitarian situation in the Middle East, we must not lose sight of the growing crisis in South Sudan. Over 9.3 million South Sudanese, approximately 83 percent of the population, are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. With a growing refugee crisis from Sudan's civil war, famine, disease outbreak, and dire economic conditions, the world's youngest country faces a series of crisis we must help address. I strongly urge this Committee to continue robustly funding aid for South Sudan to strengthen its crisis response and democratic peacebuilding efforts.

***Safe & Efficient Travel for Airline Passengers – Increased Support of the Transportation Security Administration***

The protection of U.S. airspace is a critical national security issue that demands attention and investment from Congress. I appreciate the Appropriations Committee's consistent support for the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) vital security mission, including providing pay parity for the TSA workforce in recent years. However, at current budgetary levels, TSA estimates that it will not be able to complete its deployment of critical screening technologies – specifically the Computed Tomography (CT) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Credential Authentication Technology (CAT-2) – until nearly 20 years from now at the earliest. With TSA processing record numbers of travelers, these new technologies are crucial to screening baggage and passengers efficiently and accurately. I urge the Committee to provide increased funding for CT and CAT-2 to speed their deployment without diverting resources from other critical TSA programs.

I genuinely appreciate your consideration of my New Jersey and national appropriations priorities for the Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations bills. The bipartisan work you have done together as Chair and Vice Chair to serve the American people embodies the highest ideals of the United States Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George S. Helmy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being the most prominent.

George S. Helmy  
United States Senator