



RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF NEW JERSEY

Dear Majority Leader Ruiz,

I am writing on behalf of the Research & Development Council of New Jersey to respectfully request your support as a co-sponsor of **Senate Budget Resolution No. 294**, sponsored by **Senator Andrew Zwick**, which would restore \$485,000 in the FY27 State Budget for statewide STEM education and workforce development initiatives.

The need for this investment is already evident in your district. While the Research & Development Council has continued this work through philanthropic support, corporate partnerships, and competitive grants, demand for these opportunities continues to outpace available resources. Restoring this appropriation would allow us to expand access to STEM education, strengthen workforce readiness, and connect more students to the industries that drive New Jersey's innovation economy. Highlights from your district include:

- 3 students from your district graduated from Governor's STEM Scholars this year, completing a rigorous STEM research and leadership experience.
- The Greater Newark STEM Ecosystem hosted a convening at NJIT bringing together nearly 100 educators, nonprofit leaders, higher education representatives, and private sector partners to move from discussion to action on career-connected STEM learning, focusing on closing skill gaps, aligning education with workforce needs, and building New Jersey's future talent pipeline.
- Greater Newark STEM Ecosystem is developing a Teacher Professional Development Working Group to identify and advance strategies for strengthening STEM learning through improved educator support.
- \$500 NJ STEM Month mini-grant to Eastside High School supported two events with over 1000 learners: the Annual STEM Fair, where students presented projects and competed for recognition, and the Planet Smilez Discovering Dentistry Symposium, a hands-on exploration of dental careers that provided students from underserved communities with simulation materials, professional mentorship, and transportation support.
- Science Park High School hosted a showcase where 1,000 learners experienced student projects across multiple disciplines — spanning demonstrations, research, and experimental inquiry — presented by students in grades 9–12.
- 400 students at 13th Avenue School presented their second schoolwide STEAM showcase, with each class displaying sustainability-focused projects on Ecocitizenship — researching and designing solutions to support their community — reviewed by administration and fellow students.

- NJIT partnered with Newark Public Schools to host the AMC 10 and 12 math competitions for approximately 130 high school students, giving participants the opportunity to compete in the Mathematical Association of America's 25-question, 75-minute assessments.

This appropriation is not a new investment. Funding for these initiatives has been included in previous State Budgets and has helped support statewide efforts to strengthen STEM education, workforce readiness, and economic competitiveness. We are seeking its restoration to ensure these programs can continue to meet growing demand and reach more students, educators, and communities.

New Jersey's innovation economy is one of the strongest in the nation, but its continued success depends on developing the next generation of scientists, engineers, researchers, healthcare professionals, and technology leaders. We recently outlined this challenge in an op-ed, [New Jersey's Innovation Economy Depends on Today's STEM Students](#), which highlights why investments in STEM education are ultimately investments in workforce readiness, economic competitiveness, and New Jersey's long-term prosperity.

The requested appropriation would support five interconnected statewide initiatives:

- [Governor's STEM Scholars](#) – Connecting students directly with New Jersey's innovation ecosystem through research, mentorship, and career exploration. The program now has more than 1,100 alumni and receives more than 1,000 applications annually.
- [NJ STEM Pathways Network](#) – Coordinating eight regional STEM learning ecosystems and more than 800 cross-sector partners working to strengthen STEM education and workforce development.
- [njSTEMlink](#) – Connecting STEM professionals with classrooms and community organizations across all 21 counties, helping students see themselves in STEM careers.
- [NJ STEM Month](#) – Engaging learners statewide in the month of March through events and activities that celebrate New Jersey's leadership in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

This investment is particularly important because it expands opportunities for students who have historically been underrepresented in STEM fields, including girls, students of color, first-generation college students, and economically disadvantaged youth. Through Governor's STEM Scholars alone, participation by students from underrepresented races in STEM, first-generation college students, and low-income communities has grown substantially in recent years, demonstrating both the demand for and impact of intentional outreach and support.

Restoring this funding will allow us to recruit more students into STEM pathways, expand STEM learning ecosystems into underserved regions of the state, strengthen partnerships with employers in high-growth industries, and better prepare New Jersey's future workforce for careers in fields such as artificial intelligence, healthcare, sustainable energy, advanced manufacturing, and defense.

We would be honored to have your support as a co-sponsor of Budget Resolution No. 294. We would greatly appreciate your consideration and would welcome an update from your office regarding the Senator's decision.

Please let me know if I can provide any additional information or answer any questions.

Thank you for your continued leadership and commitment to New Jersey's students, workforce, and innovation economy.

Warm regards,

Alise Roderer
Director, Governor's STEM Scholars
Research & Development Council of New Jersey

Attachments: FY27 Budget Request One-Pager; *New Jersey's Innovation Economy Depends on Today's STEM Students*