

MEDIA ALERT: Below is for use in THURSDAY'S coverage of new U.S. Census report

Legal Services of New Jersey
100 Metroplex Drive at Plainfield Avenue
P.O. Box 1357
Edison, New Jersey 08818-1357

Contact: Harvey Fisher
Office Phone: 732-529-8430
Cell Phone: 908-616-9941
E-mail: hfisher@lsnj.org

**COMMENTS FROM LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY FOR MEDIA COVERAGE
OF LATEST POVERTY AND OTHER STATISTICS BEING RELEASED BY THE
CENSUS FOR PUBLICATION THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26**

EDISON —The just announced decline in the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) during 2018 hides and greatly understates the extent of true poverty in New Jersey. The hard reality is that poverty in New Jersey remains at historic levels with far more New Jerseyans still mired in poverty than there were in 2007.

Despite major improvement in the state's economy and drop in unemployment, the poor largely were left behind in one of the nation's most wealthy states.

That's among the major observations the Poverty Research Institute (PRI) of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) made about the U. S. Census report released Thursday. LSNJ President Melville D. Miller Jr. stated, "Any drop in the poverty rate is a welcome development, but it cannot and should not obscure the fact that poverty in our state last year remained significantly higher than at the beginning of the recession 11 years ago. That's deeply disturbing and shameful."

Shivi Prasad, director of PRI, noted, "The federal poverty rate, which last year deemed incomes below \$20,231 for a family of three as poverty, is grossly misleading and understated because it does not account for New Jersey's high cost of living." A new PRI study — soon to be made public — will reveal that the extent of true poverty is several times higher in some parts of the Garden State.

"We must keep our eyes on true poverty," Miller stressed. "Such actual deprivation can put families out on the street and even break them up. It can bar children from thriving in school and can threaten their very lives. It cannot be ignored."

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state's Legal Services system, a network of five independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases. LSNJ's Poverty Research Institute conducts systemic research on the incidence, effects and aspects of poverty and the relationship among poverty, work and public policy.