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A Cherokee High School photographer snaps a shot of Gov. Mikie Sherrill with audience members after an online-safety event at the Evesham school on March 18. JIM WALSH/COURIER-POST

NJ lags in drug price reform

Scott Fallon
NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

When Gov. Mikie Sherrill called for reforms last week to reduce drug costs, she asked the Legislature to develop a package of bills that would target pharmacy benefit managers — large companies that act as middlemen in the drug supply chain and have been blamed by many for inflated prices.

But New Jersey isn't venturing into a new wave of uncharted health care regulations.

It's playing catch-up.

New Jersey has lagged behind other states when it comes to enacting those reforms, despite having some of the highest out-of-pocket drug costs, one report said.

Of 16 types of state laws to rein in pharmacy benefit managers, New Jersey has passed only four since 2017, said an analysis by the National Academy for State Health Policy.

Drug pricing is complex, and it is unclear how much of an effect these state laws have had on lowering them. But regulators and some academics have said major reforms could lead to significant savings for patients, with one report putting the number as high as \$100 billion annually.

The target in recent years of both Democratic and Republican lawmakers has been PBMs, such as CVS Caremark, Cigna's Express Scripts and UnitedHealth Group's Optum RX, which negotiate prices with drug manufacturers on behalf of employers and health plans, help decide which medications are covered by insurance and reimburse pharmacies. They have been criticized for exorbitant markups for generic drugs, lack of transparency and unfair business practices, especially with independent pharmacies.

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Sherrill warns against Big Tech during visit to Cherokee High

Jim Walsh
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Big Tech is the new Big Tobacco, only worse, New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill said in calling for more protections for children from online dangers.

"As a mom, I can tell you with certainty that our country is failing our children when it comes to their mental health and protecting them online," Sherrill

said at an appearance March 18 at Cherokee High School in Evesham. "And of course this is personal to me with my children, and to millions of parents like me ... on whom Big Tech has dumped this entire responsibility."

She said a youth mental health crisis, including rising rates for depression and anxiety, has been worsened "by unrestricted social media use and predatory, addictive algorithm pushed by Big Tech."

Sherrill spoke two days after addressing the potential impact of artificial intelligence on children during another South Jersey stop in Mount Laurel.

"The best thing we can do for our students is to train them in AI," she told a gathering of several hundred people hosted by the Southern New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

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Atlantic County prosecutor claims county support insufficient

Joseph P. Smith
Cherry Hill Courier-Post
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

A few weeks ahead of Atlantic County officials adopting a 2026 budget, a public dispute has erupted over how much money the prosecutor's office will



Reynolds

see this year and into the future.

In an online post on March 17, Atlantic County Prosecutor William E. Reynolds pushed hard for more money from the county.

"Our team sees humanity at its worst," Reynolds stated. "They investigate and prosecute sex offenders, child predators, human traffickers, violent offenders, murderers, drug dealers, and those who prey upon the vulnerable."

"They carry that emotional burden every day with courage and profession-

alism. This work is demanding, it is critically important, and it deserves the full support of the County."

County Executive Dennis Levinson pushed back on Reynolds's framing of the situation in a release later on Tuesday.

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