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Dear Editor,

I am writing to express the human reality that can so easily be lost in the politics of the state budget battle. After all, the decisions being made in Trenton should ultimately be about the consequences they hold for the millions of people trying to make a life in New Jersey.

Our state's perennial budget crisis has tremendous human costs, and these costs are not born equally. Each year that we fail to address structural deficits and inadequate revenues the people least able to absorb this failure are the ones who suffer. People in poverty are left scrambling just to survive, without the resources to pull themselves out of the hole. Meanwhile, front-line human services workers go another year trying to stretch inadequate assistance dollars for their clients, when they are often struggling themselves.

On the economic side, we need to recognize that New Jersey's budget problem is a revenue problem. We have had years of cuts or freezes to vital assistance. We have reworked the pension system for our firefighters, teachers, and other state workers. Profligate spending is not our problem – an imbalance of revenues is. The last time New Jersey passed a millionaire's tax opponents said that the rich would flee the state. In reality, the number and share of high-income tax filers increased dramatically.¹ These tax payers have since benefitted from cuts. Now it is time for them to help the state start working for everyone again.

I urge your readers to support the millionaire's tax and greater equality in New Jersey.

Serena Rice
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¹ Source: New Jersey Policy Perspective, *Graphic: High-Income Earners Aren't Fleeing New Jersey*, May 6, 2014.