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## Staci Berger Remarks for the Fund for New Jersey

I am so honored to stand with you all tonight to express our collective gratitude to Kiki for her exceptional leadership and to celebrate the bright future of the Fund under Brandon's stellar guidance. I have worked with the Fund in every capacity of my professional career, and I am the person I am today because of it. Our Network is stronger than ever because of the Fund's decades of unwavering support. NJ is moving ever closer to racial, social, and economic justice because of the Fund.

When Kiki became President, she shifted the Fund's approach, encouraged us to be strategic and to dream big. She challenged us to do more than explain our policy ideas; she encouraged us to organize, mobilize and build power. She pushed us to be bolder and to be better, and we are both because of her dedication to our work.

Kiki transformed the Fund and made it a movement funder – and encouraged others in philanthropy to be movement funders, too. This shift deeply impacted our collective results. Pick whatever policy you want – paid family leave, housing security, ending background checks for returning ex-offenders, bail reform, raising the minimum wage, expanding civic and census participation, lowering the voting age, language access – whatever we have done to make New Jersey smaller 'd' democratic and equitable, Kiki has been there. Brandon, our steadfast ally through it all, is an exceptional person to lead us in this new chapter.

In the face of rising authoritarianism, we have no choice but to keep pushing forward, fortifying our resolve and building our movement for equity and justice. Now more than ever, we need the Fund to ensure that democracy survives and flourishes. Brandon will be that leader. His analytical prowess, thoughtful approach, and deep compassion will guide the Fund in this critical moment.

In discussions after Trump's election, Kiki and I talked about how to keep going during difficult times. I shared my favorite poem, *The Low Road* by Marge Piercy, with her. It has math in it, so it works for Brandon too.

*What can they do  
to you? Whatever they want.  
They can set you up, they can  
bust you, they can break  
your fingers, they can  
burn your brain with electricity,  
blur you with drugs till you*

*can't walk, can't remember, they can  
take your child, wall up  
your lover. They can do anything  
you can't stop them  
from doing. How can you stop  
them? Alone, you can fight,  
you can refuse, you can  
take what revenge you can  
but they roll over you.*

*But two people fighting  
back-to-back can cut through  
a mob, a snake-dancing file  
can break a cordon, an army  
can meet an army.*

*Two people can keep each other  
sane, can give support, conviction,  
love, massage, hope, sex.  
Three people are a delegation,  
a committee, a wedge. With four  
you can play bridge and start  
an organization. With six  
you can rent a whole house,  
eat pie for dinner with no  
seconds, and hold a fund-raising party.  
A dozen make a demonstration.  
A hundred fill a hall.  
A thousand have solidarity and your own newsletter;  
ten thousand, power and your own paper;  
a hundred thousand, your own media;  
ten million, your own country.*

*It goes on one at a time,  
it starts when you care  
to act, it starts when you do  
it again and they said no,  
it starts when you say **We**  
and know who you mean,  
and each day you mean one more.*

Support from the Fund gives us the ability to do it again, when they said no, to reach one more person, and to strengthen our cross-sector movement of solidarity. Whether Brandon and Kiki, two people I am very proud to call friends, are saying hello or goodbye, they are walking on this road with all of us. We owe Kiki an enormous debt of gratitude for how far we have come on our



path. Tomorrow, we must – we will – keep moving forward on the road with Brandon. On behalf of all of us at the Network, and everyone here tonight, congratulations and thank you both.