

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
SENATE BILL NO. 2049
(First Reprint)**

Senate Bill 2049 (First Reprint), which I have signed today, establishes a three-year pilot program for the transportation of nonpublic school students in grades K-12 residing in the Lakewood Township School District.

I appreciate the unique transportation challenges that confront Lakewood, where the vast majority of students attend nonpublic schools, and but for a robust courtesy busing program, many of these students would have to cross dangerous and crowded intersections to get to and from school. Due to the rapid growth in population, high traffic volume, overcrowded sidewalks, and crosswalks in need of improvements, students do not have safe pathways to walk to and from school. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the student population in the district will continue to increase, causing greater demands on the already congested roads. This bill ensures all nonpublic school students can get to school safely, while easing the financial burden on the district in providing courtesy busing to address its unique safety concerns.

I commend the bill's sponsors for ensuring the safe transportation of our young students. No matter what school they attend, public or nonpublic, all children in New Jersey should be able to travel safely between their home and school.

However, while the pilot program offers a temporary solution for the next three years, the bill does not address the underlying transportation and infrastructure challenges that exist in Lakewood. The safety concerns for students walking to and from schools (and other residents of Lakewood as well) will persist and even intensify until permanent infrastructure improvements are made. For these reasons, I call upon the municipal government to use the relief afforded by this bill to take steps to ensure the safe transportation of its schoolchildren. Specifically, I urge the Township of Lakewood to work with the Division of Local Government Services to develop a Memorandum of Understanding within the next 90 days that will ensure that sufficient capital monies are budgeted for and made available to study, plan and complete necessary infrastructure work such that residents and students of the township can safely walk to school. To encourage the active engagement of the municipal government in making such necessary

improvements, and depending upon progress made in this regard, I will consider dedicating a portion of the appropriation to fund this busing program in the budget I will propose next February to projects that will enhance pedestrian safety.

Date: August 9, 2016

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Scott A. Coffina

Senior Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor