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Acting Governor Kim Guadagno Signs Legislation Increasing Transportation Safety for Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

July 12, 2012

Tags: [Transportation](#)

New Law Protects Persons with Disabilities as They Travel on School Buses

Trenton, NJ – Taking another important step in the Christie Administration's commitment to support individuals with developmental disabilities, Acting Governor Kim Guadagno today signed into law legislation that secures school bus safety precautions for adult students with developmental disabilities. The legislation, S-618, requires school bus drivers to use flashing red lights when picking up or discharging passengers with disabilities and requires drivers of vehicles approaching or overtaking a school bus to stop at least 25 feet when the bus that has activated its flashing lights. The legislation also establishes penalties for violators, consistent with protections and violations currently in effect for child passengers on school buses.

"By signing this bill into law, we are making a commonsense and important step to provide adult students with development disabilities with the same protections currently in place for child passengers. We are not only increasing the safety factor for persons with disabilities, but also making safety indicators more consistent for motorists who encounter school buses in their daily travels," said Acting Governor Guadagno. "Motorists will know without a doubt when they see a school bus come to a stop and lights are flashing, they must stop their vehicles for passengers who are getting on or off the bus."

"As the father of an adult daughter with a developmental disability, I know the challenges these individuals face every day. It is our responsibility to ensure that we are protecting them from harm whenever and wherever possible," said Senate President Steve Sweeney. "This is really just a commonsense law that will require school bus drivers and motorists to use the same precautionary measures that are used when a school bus is transporting school children."

The new law prohibits the driver of the school bus from starting the bus or discontinuing the flashing red lights until every person with a developmental disability who exited the bus has reached a place of safety and extends penalties for failing to comply with the law. Motorists who pass a school bus stopped with flashing red lights and carrying persons with disabilities face a fine of no less than \$100, could be subject to up to 15 days in jail or could face 15 days of community service. Violators will also receive 5 points on their drivers license.

"The New Jersey Council on Developmental Disabilities supports the passing of this important piece of legislation, as it recognizes that safety and accessibility in transportation are key elements to meaningful community inclusion for people with developmental disabilities in New Jersey," said Executive Director Alison Lozano. "With this bill, the Governor and Legislature acknowledge the fact that we must consider all citizens in the planning and implementation of public programs and services."

Primary sponsors of the bill are Senator Steve Sweeney (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester), Senator Diane Allen (R-Burlington, Camden), Assemblywoman Celeste Riley (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester) and Assemblyman John Burzichelli (D-Salem, Cumberland, Gloucester).

The Christie Administration is committed to helping New Jerseyans with developmental disabilities or mental illness lead richer lives. The Fiscal Year 2013 Budget furthers that commitment through enhanced funding provided to support community placements and additional programs and services. In addition, a realignment of programs for children with disabilities or in need of behavioral health services will occur in order to enable the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to provide family-oriented support services that care for the whole child.

Recognizing The Unique Needs Of Individuals With Developmental Disabilities

<http://nj.gov/governor/news/news/552012/approved/20120712a.html>

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This year's budget reaffirms the Christie Administration's commitment to a fundamental rethinking of how individuals with developmental disabilities receive services. Governor Christie has long spoken of the state's moral imperative to recognize the individuality and unique needs of every New Jerseyan with a developmental disability.

Rethinking How To Serve Children With Developmental Disabilities

The creation of the Division of Child Integrated System of Care Services in the DCF will finally address the holistic needs and concerns of families with children with developmental disabilities in one place. The reorganization is designed to ensure that families of people with developmental disabilities have access to every possible support that State government provides. The new division will become the departmental "home" for children with multiple needs, bringing together programs now scattered throughout State government. This will allow for a more family-centric approach.

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Press Contact:
Michael Drewniak
Kevin Roberts
609-777-2600



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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000