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Governor Christie Signs Legislation to Bolster Efforts to Fight Drug Abuse and Addiction in New Jersey

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Measures Provide Stronger Tools to Help Prevent Prescription Medicine and Opioid Abuse

Trenton, NJ – Taking action to support New Jerseyans and their families faced with the disease of addiction, Governor Chris Christie today signed legislative measures to enhance the State's Project Medicine Drop program and to strengthen the Attorney General's law enforcement coordination efforts against opioid drug abuse.

"I'm proud of what we've done in New Jersey and proud of the work that we continue to do together to help people reclaim their lives. But we cannot become complacent," said Governor Christie. "Today, we are taking further action to keep our fight against drug abuse and addiction going strong. We're doing this by continuing successful programs like Project Medicine Drop to get unused prescriptions out of the medicine cabinet and into drop-off bins as well as fortifying our coordinated efforts against the scourge of opioid abuse in an effort to save more lives."

A-2859 advances the continuation of the Department of Law & Public Safety's (L&PS) existing Project Medicine Drop program. In addition, the bill provides for future expansion of the program at the funding discretion of the Department. Furthermore, L&PS is required to post on its website a list of all secure prescription medicine drop-off locations, including receptacles maintained by the Division of Consumer Affairs, as well as any receptacle located in New Jersey that is approved by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration. Project Medicine Drop, an initiative of L&PS' Division of Consumer Affairs, provides residents with a safe and secure way to dispose of unneeded medications through "prescription drug drop boxes" located at law enforcement agencies usually comprised of police departments, sheriff's offices, and State Police barracks across the Garden State.

Currently, there are 126 Project Medicine Drop locations across the state with approximately 50 having mobile boxes for special off-site collection events. Since its creation in November 2011, New Jersey residents have dropped off approximately 53,924 pounds or nearly 27 tons of unused medications.

Primary sponsors of A-2859 include: Assemblymembers Eustace, Benson, Vainieri-Huttle Lagana, and Caride and Senators Whelan and Kean.

Governor Christie also signed S-2372, which gives the Attorney General the ability to coordinate statewide law enforcement efforts against opioid abuse in the Garden State. These coordination activities include the Division of Consumer Affairs and professional licensing boards in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting the illegal sources and distribution of prescription opioid drugs; taking appropriate steps to enhance the oversight by professional licensing boards; and providing training to law enforcement officials, physicians, and pharmacists.

Among activities already being coordinated is the implementation and training of NARCAN administration. To date, 496 law enforcement agencies have been trained in Narcan administration with 488 agencies currently carrying Narcan on patrol. Overall, nearly 900 overdoses have been reversed through successful naloxone deployment. Additionally, the state's Prescription Monitoring Program (NJMPMP) continues to advance. As of April, 88.4% of the state's 29,400

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licensed doctors had registered to use the NJPMP database.

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Madden and Oroho and Assemblymembers Caride, Mosquera, Pinkin, and Moriarty.

Today's action builds on the Governor's record of aggressively taking on the fight against drug addiction and abuse by emphasizing both prevention and treatment. Other recent measures Governor Christie signed to assist New Jersey's drug treatment and prevention efforts include:

- **P.L. 2015, c. 10:** which expands the bipartisan Overdose Prevention Act of 2013 by adding a provision that provides immunity to first responders. This law provides protections for first responders taking part in the Christie Administration's lifesaving Narcan pilot program and EMS waiver in effect in communities throughout New Jersey. It also clarifies immunity provisions for administering and dispensing Narcan to individuals and programs involved in the treatment of substance abuse and those that interact with substance abusers.
- **P.L. 2015, c. 9:** which requires Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services to annually prepare substance use treatment provider performance report, and make available to public
- **P.L. 2015, c. 11:** which requires DHS and DOC to formulate joint arrangement and plan to ensure provision of mental health and substance use disorder services to inmates

Other aggressive action taken by Governor Christie:

- **Creating the Facing Addiction Task Force:** This 12-member team of leaders and experts from inside and outside of government is chaired by Pastor Joe Carter and co-chaired by former Governor Jim McGreevey to fight addiction through treatment and prevention.
- **One-Stop Access To Help Ex-Offenders Battling Drug Addiction:** Governor Christie announced a groundbreaking one-stop model for connecting comprehensive services to ex-offenders re-entering society. Based on the principle of Integrated Reintegration, the Governor announced a program designed to streamline services available to ex-offenders to ensure they receive the kind of support they need to reclaim their lives and eventually move off government services and into the workplace.
- **A Statewide Expansion Of Drug Court:** This smarter and more effective approach is focused on helping drug-addicted offenders reclaim their lives with treatment, rather than warehousing them in prison. The landmark, bipartisan legislation signed by Governor Christie calls for a five-year phase in period, during which the capacity of the state's drug courts will be expanded and the effectiveness of the effort will be measured.
- **Signing Bipartisan Overdose Protection Act Into Law:** Governor Chris Christie signed the bipartisan Overdose Protection Act into legislation into law which takes a two-prong approach to help prevent drug overdose deaths in New Jersey. First, it provides legal protection to people who are in violation of the law while they are attempting to help a drug overdose victim. Secondly, it eliminates negative legal action against health care professionals or bystanders who administer overdose antidotes in life-threatening situations. In February 2015, Governor Christie signed an expansion of the Overdose Prevention Act, adding a provision providing immunity to first responders who administer and dispense Narcan.
- **Integrating Substance Abuse Treatment With Employment Services:** Governor Christie is going further in helping those with drug addiction reclaim their lives in a permanent way, by taking the lead on an innovative initiative to integrate substance abuse treatment with employment services like job training, skills acquisition, and job-search and placement resources
- **Implementing A Statewide Program To Train And Equip First Responders To Save Lives:** Governor Christie announced the statewide expansion of the successful pilot program to help reduce the number of heroin-related deaths by training and equipping police officers and first responders to administer the antidote Narcan to overdose victims.
- **Expansion of Prescription Monitoring Program (NJPMP) to Include Interstate Data-Sharing:** In October 2014, Governor Christie announced that the New Jersey Prescription Monitoring Program (NJPMP) expanded its interstate data-sharing capabilities to connect with the State of Delaware's Prescription Monitoring Program. In addition, New Jersey is in the process of building a similar partnership with the State of New York.

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Press Contact:

Kevin Roberts
Brian Murray
609-777-2600



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