

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 5655

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 5655 with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill would appropriate \$87,783,515 from constitutionally dedicated corporation business tax (CBT) revenues and various Green Acres funds to the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP"). Of the total amount appropriated by the bill, \$83,514,765 would be used by the DEP to provide grants, loans, or both, to assist local government units in the State to acquire or develop lands for recreation and conservation purposes, and \$4,268,750 would be used for the DEP's associated administrative costs.

These grants and loans will benefit numerous communities across the State by providing opportunities to engage in healthy activities, enjoy the outdoors, and spend quality family time together. Consistent with our shared goal of benefitting the environmental, quality of life, and economic health in New Jersey by conserving open space for natural resources and recreational purposes, I am recommending changes that would allow enhanced payments to municipalities in lieu of taxes for lands acquired by the State and non-profit organizations for recreation and conservation purposes. Section 30 of the Garden State Preservation Trust Act requires the State to extend payments in lieu of taxes to municipalities in which lands are acquired by the State or nonprofit organizations for these purposes. My recommended changes will enhance compensation for municipalities that protect and preserve open, undeveloped lands, reflect the comprehensive deal struck with my legislative partners for Fiscal Year 2024, and advance our shared commitments to open space conservation.

Therefore, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 5655 and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Title, Line 5: After "expenses" insert "and concerning open space preservation and recreational development"

Page 9, Section 8, Line 47: After "8." insert "Notwithstanding the provisions of any law or regulation to the contrary, amounts appropriated from the General Fund in State Fiscal Year 2024 for payments to municipalities in lieu of taxes for lands acquired by the State and non-profit organizations for recreation and conservation purposes shall be provided only to municipalities whose payments received in fiscal year 2010 exceeded \$5,000 and shall be provided at 83 percent of the payment amount provided in fiscal year 2010, subject to the approval of the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting.
9."

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Respectfully,
/s/ Philip D. Murphy
Governor

Attest:
/s/ Parimal Garg
Chief Counsel to the Governor