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Governor Christie Signs Model Legislation To Help Minor Offenders Reclaim Their Lives

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Expungement Reform Bills Aimed at Helping Those Suffering With Disease of Addiction

Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today signed a bipartisan package of bills that changes and modernizes the state’s expungement system in an effort to help minor criminal offenders reclaim their lives.

“Having a criminal record often impedes the ability to get a job, purchase a home or vehicle, or simply have and take care of a family,” said Governor Christie. “We want to give those overcoming incarceration or the disease of addiction, young offenders, and all who have earned and deserve it, a second chance at life. I want to thank Senator Sandra Cunningham whose leadership and partnership helped to make this legislation a true model for other states to replicate.”

The life-saving reform legislation signed into law today by Governor Christie includes:

Senate Bill 3306: Strengthens the original “Ban the Box” legislation by further preventing employers from making any oral, written or online inquiries about the candidate’s criminal record, and from using an online application that requires disclosure of an applicant’s criminal record, including an expungement criminal record. This action will provide people with an opportunity to provide their own personal history during an employment interview rather than being judged on their own criminal record.

Senate Bill 3307: Revises procedures for expunging criminal and other records and information, including shortening certain waiting periods for expungement eligibility and increasing the number of convictions that may be expunged. These include:

- Allows a petitioner to expunge up to four instead of three, offenses or multiple offenses that occurred within a short timeframe, if the petitioner has not been convicted of any prior or subsequent offense;
- Reduces the expungement eligibility waiting period from 10 years to six years, following the latest of any conviction, payment of fine, and completion of probation, parole, or prison sentence;
- Further reduces the expungement eligibility waiting period if satisfaction of a fine or restitution is the petitioner’s only remaining barrier and the court finds that the expungement is in the public’s interest; and
- Aligns expungement and sentencing statutes, allowing expungement for possession of marijuana with the intent to sell up to one ounce, which is the threshold for a fourth-degree crime

Senate Bill 3308: Allows young adults to expunge their juvenile records two years sooner than current law permits, decreasing the waiting period from five to three years to expunge an entire juvenile record, and maintaining all other requirements and provisions. As a result, young offenders will have fewer barriers to overcome as they re-enter society and begin their lives as adults.

“Giving people second chances has been a guiding principle of my administration and a driving force behind many of my policies and initiatives, especially in regard to prisoner reentry and substance use disorder,” said Governor Christie. “The revisions we are implementing today will provide people with an even greater opportunity to become employed and become productive members of society once again after they have paid their debt to society.”

Visit ReachNJ.gov for assistance with addiction prevention, treatment and recovery, as well as a record of Governor Christie's initiatives, programs, policies and services at the forefront of America's fight against this deadly disease.

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