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Acting Governor Kim Guadagno Signs Bipartisan Legislation Establishing 2014 NJ Special Olympics "Home Team" Fund

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Trenton, NJ – Acting Governor Kim Guadagno today signed bipartisan legislation to support New Jersey athletes participating in the 2014 Special Olympics USA Games. The bill, S-1855, creates the "2014 NJ Special Olympics Home Team Fund" within the Department of Treasury and allows state taxpayers to make voluntary contributions to the fund through their 2012/2013 gross income tax returns. New Jersey will host the 2014 games from June 14-21, 2014 at locations in the Greater Princeton/Mercer County Area, including Princeton University, Rider University, The College of New Jersey, Mercer County Parks, The Lawrenceville School, The Hun School, and other public and private schools.

"For 45 years, Special Olympics has made a difference in the lives of millions of children and adults with intellectual disabilities by promoting acceptance, inclusion and dignity," said Acting Governor Guadagno. "By establishing this fund, we're giving New Jersey athletes an opportunity to train for and inspire others with their participation in this experience of a lifetime. At the same time, the Special Olympics has fostered a greater understanding and acceptance worldwide of those living with disabilities – our state's opportunity to be a part of this tradition is an honor."

The bill requires the Legislature to appropriate all donations deposited in the fund to Special Olympics New Jersey to help fund the training and participation of New Jersey athletes in the 2014 Special Olympics USA Games.

"The Special Olympics is a wonderful event that has brought untold joy to thousands of children and adults both in New Jersey and across the country," said Senate President Stephen M. Sweeney. "I have seen their joy and accomplishments first hand. New Jerseyans always have, and always will be, a giving people and I believe that generosity will spill over into helping support our Special Olympics athletes."

All funds appropriated to Special Olympics New Jersey must be used solely to fund expenses associated with the training of New Jersey athletes participating in the 2014 Special Olympics USA Games and the participation of New Jersey athletes in the games, including, but not limited to, equipment, insurance, room and board, travel, and uniforms.

"The Special Olympics are a cherished event for people with disabilities that showcase everything that is right with us as a society," said Senator Thomas H. Kean, Jr. "There are few more worthy causes for the State to facilitate easy, voluntary contributions through state income tax returns than this exhibition of human spirit, determination, and hard work."

The New Jersey Special Olympics "Home Team" will be comprised of athletes from throughout New Jersey who will have qualified for selection to the team through advancement in statewide competitions.

"We are very excited to welcome the Special Olympics to New Jersey in 2014 and to support these extraordinary athletes," said Thomas Baffuto, executive director of The Arc of New Jersey. "It is with great pleasure that we thank the bill sponsors for all their hard work during the legislative process and Acting Governor Guadagno for signing this bill into law. We are grateful for the Christie Administration's continued dedication to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities."

The Special Olympics expects 3,500 athletes, 1,000 coaches and delegates, and 8,000 volunteers to participate in the 2014 games with as many as 80,000 spectators anticipated to visit the Mercer/Middlesex County region during the competition, bringing an estimated \$50 million into the regional area.

The bipartisan legislation was sponsored by Senators Stephen M. Sweeney (D-Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem) and Thomas H. Kean, Jr. (R-Morris, Somerset and Union).

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