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Governor Chris Christie Signs Lifesaving Janet's Law

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New Law Makes Automated External Defibrillators (AED) and Cardiac Emergency Action Plans a Requirement in All New Jersey Schools

Trenton, NJ – Acting to safeguard the lives of New Jersey's K-12 students, Governor Chris Christie today signed "Janet's Law," requiring all public and nonpublic schools to have automated external defibrillators (AED) on site. In addition, the new law (A-1608), calls for schools to establish emergency action plans to respond to sudden cardiac events, in order to be as prepared as possible to deal with life-threatening emergencies. The law is named in memory of Janet Zilinski, an 11-year-old resident from Warren who died of sudden cardiac arrest following cheerleading squad practice.

"By signing Janet's Law, we hope to prevent other families from having to live through the shock and sorrow of unexpectedly losing a beloved child to an emergency cardiac situation," said Governor Christie. "This law ensures that our schools will be prepared by having the appropriate equipment and that designated staff is properly trained to handle these sudden events before, during and after school. I am proud to sign this law in memory of Janet and I thank her parents, Karen and Jim Zilinski, for their commitment and action taken in their daughter's name to help prevent other families from facing the same tragedy."

As a result of Janet's Law, all public and non-public schools, K-12, will have an automated external defibrillator on school property that is properly identified in an unlocked location beginning September 1, 2014. The defibrillator must be accessible during the school day as well as during school-sponsored athletic events or team practices and within reasonable proximity to the school athletic field or gymnasium.

A school's emergency action plan must contain a list of at least five school employees, team coaches or athletic trainers who have certifications in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and the use of a defibrillator from either the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, or other training program recognized by the New Jersey Department of Health. Further, the detailed response procedure must identify the appropriate school official responsible for responding to the person experiencing the sudden cardiac event, calling 911, starting cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, retrieving and using the defibrillator, and assisting emergency responders in getting to the individual experiencing the sudden cardiac event.

"Saving lives is the most important goal of Janet's Law," said Assembly Minority Leader Jon Bramnick. "All schools will now have a defibrillator available and an emergency plan in place which will help avoid the tragedy which the Lipinski family experienced. I appreciate the unanimous support this bill received in the Legislature and I thank Governor Christie for signing it into law."

The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Health, will adopt rules and regulations as necessary to implement the provisions of the legislation.

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Assemblymembers Jon M. Bramnick (R-Morris, Somerset, Union); Craig J. Coughlin (D-Middlesex); Vincent Prieto (D-Bergen, Hudson); Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr. (D-Middlesex); Thomas P. Giblin (D-Essex, Passaic); and David P. Rible (R-Monmouth, Ocean).

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