

Office of the Governor

NEWS RELEASE

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ACTING GOV. DIFRANCESCO SIGNS LAW TO ENCOURAGE PERMANENCE IN ADOPTION, PROTECT BEST INTEREST OF CHILDREN

Senate President Donald DiFrancesco, serving as acting governor, today signed legislation that will ensure permanence in adoption placement by setting stricter guidelines and requirements for the establishment of parentage and the filing of objections by unmarried parents.

"The bond formed between adoptive parents and adopted children should not be shattered by the sudden appearance of a biological parent - sometimes several years after an adoption occurs," Senator DiFrancesco said. "This legislation ensures that the courts make the child's best interests the top priority when making a decision regarding an adoption."

S-56, sponsored by Senator Walter Kavanaugh and Assembly Members Kip Bateman and Peter Biondi (R-Morris/Somerset), requires certain unmarried parents to acknowledge paternity within 120 days of a child's birth or prior to the date of the preliminary adoption hearing to be entitled to receive notice of adoption. Upon receiving notice, a parent wishing to object to the adoption must file a written objection within 20 days, in the case of a resident, or 35 days in the case of a non-resident.

Additionally, the bill establishes the "best interest of the child" as the standard for resolving contested adoption cases.

Senate President Di Francesco is serving as acting governor while Gov. Christie Whitman attends the Bilderberg Conference, an international forum on political and economic concerns, in Ayrshire, Scotland.