

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ADVANCE COPY

SENATE BILL NO. 2134

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 2134 without my approval.

This bill, which was not part of the Fiscal Year 2011 Appropriations Act, will take the Fiscal Year 2011 budget out of balance by making a supplemental appropriation of \$24.6 million out of the General Fund for the New Jersey FamilyCare program. The State simply does not have the resources to fund this appropriation.

The New Jersey FamilyCare program undoubtedly serves a valuable role in New Jersey. As Governor, I remain committed to protecting our most vulnerable New Jerseyans. In spite of this unprecedented economic crisis, my Administration has maintained funding that allows over 900,000 children and low-income parents or guardians to have access to comprehensive health care services through the New Jersey FamilyCare program. Specifically, in Fiscal Year 2011, the State will continue to provide affordable and quality health care through the New Jersey FamilyCare program to approximately 650,000 children and over 260,000 adults. The Fiscal Year 2011 Budget continues my Administration's commitment to ensuring that the most vulnerable have access to comprehensive health care services. This commitment is demonstrated by the Fiscal Year 2011 Budget which provides tens of millions of dollars in increased charity care and hospital funding along with \$40 million in funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs).

Unfortunately, difficult and painful decisions were made in order to meet New Jersey's constitutional requirement to balance its budget during this unprecedented fiscal crisis. The State

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had to close an \$11 billion budget shortfall while State revenues remained lower than five years ago.

This period of shared sacrifice has not been easy, but in order for New Jersey to achieve fiscal stability, the State can no longer continue to spend taxpayer dollars in a way that would risk taking the budget out of balance. The State simply cannot afford to pay for the supplemental appropriation provided for in this bill. We reached a bi-partisan budget agreement within our means. This was not part of that agreement. To sign it would be fiscally irresponsible.

I cannot approve spending proposed by the Legislature that was not accounted for in the Budget nor envisioned as part of the bipartisan agreement on a spending plan. The Fiscal Year 2011 Budget includes a surplus of just one percent. This unbudgeted spending, together with other unbudgeted spending bills the legislature has sent to me, are not paid for and would seriously undermine our Fiscal Year 2011 Budget.

Indeed, it would be patently irresponsible to approve any additional spending at this time when the Office of Legislative Services has authored a report, requested by Assembly Democrats, that expresses concern that unrestrained, "hands off the wheel" spending could cause the State to face a gap of up to \$10.5 billion next fiscal year. While I disagree with their conclusion, the days of predicting dire circumstances one day and voting for non-budgeted expenses the next, are over under this Governor.

I am pleased to report to the people of New Jersey that the hands are back on the wheel, state spending has been reset to levels that the taxpayers can afford and that supplemental spending that would return to the unchecked spending and out of

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control budget shortfalls of the past will not make it past the Governor's desk.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 2134 without my approval.

Respectfully,
/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

[seal]

Attest:

/s/ Jeffrey S. Chiesa
Chief Counsel to the Governor