

**SENATE BILL NO. 976
(Second Reprint)**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 976 (Second Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

I commend the sponsors of this legislation for responding to the critical need for comprehensive reforms to the State's medical examiner system, including establishing a new Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner in the Department of Health. I fully support the bill's revisions, which, among other things, centralize operations and oversight within the new office and implement the National Association of Medical Examiners' recommendation that medical examiners operate independently of law enforcement. These reforms will ensure that medicolegal death investigations are conducted effectively and consistently throughout the State.

In support of this endeavor, I am recommending minor revisions to delete an outdated statutory reference and further clarify the relationship between the Office of the Chief State Medical Examiner and the Department of Law and Public Safety. These clarifications will assist in the effective transition of the medical examiner system from the Department of Law and Public Safety to the Department of Health.

Therefore, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 976 (Second Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

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| <u>Page 7, Section 7, Lines 12-13:</u> | Delete ", in the discretion of the Attorney General, as provided by section 4 of P.L. 1967, c.234 (C.52:17B-81)," |
| <u>Page 11, Section 10, Lines 30-31:</u> | Delete in their entirety |
| <u>Page 11, Section 10, Line 32:</u> | Delete "(11)" and insert "(10)" |
| <u>Page 11, Section 10, Line 34:</u> | Delete "(12)" and insert "(11)" |
| <u>Page 11, Section 10, Line 36:</u> | Delete "(13)" and insert "(12)" |
| <u>Page 11, Section 10, Line 40:</u> | Delete "(14)" and insert "(13)" |
| <u>Page 11, Section 10, Line 41:</u> | Delete "(15)" and insert "(14)" |

Page 11, Section 10, Line 43: Delete "(16)" and insert "(15)"

Page 11, Section 10, Line 45: Delete "(17)" and insert "(16)"

Page 11, Section 10, Line 46: Delete "(18)" and insert "(17)"

Page 11, Section 10, Line 47: Delete "(19)" and insert "(18)"

Page 11, Section 10, Line 48: Delete "(20)" and insert "(19)"

Page 12, Section 10, Line 1: Delete "(21)" and insert "(20)"

Page 27, Section 17, Line 33: After "occurred" insert "and to the Attorney General"

Page 27, Section 17, Line 33: After "records" insert "and other information"

Page 27, Section 17, Line 35: After "prosecutor" insert "or the Attorney General"

Page 27, Section 17, Line 37: After "prosecutor" insert "or the Attorney General"

Page 30, Section 21, Line 26: After "standards." insert "c. The Chief State Medical Examiner shall ensure that the Attorney General and each county prosecutor, as applicable, promptly receive copies of all final toxicology laboratory testing results from the New Jersey State Medical Examiner Toxicology Laboratory or another lab as permitted by subsection b. of this section for toxicology specimens submitted from the Office of Chief State Medical examiner or any county or intercounty medical examiner's office. The Attorney General or county prosecutor may obtain copies of the final toxicology testing results as the Attorney General or county prosecutor deems necessary for the fulfillment of his or her official duties."

Page 30, Section 21, Line 27: Delete "c." and insert "d."

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor