

**SENATE BILL No. 979
(First Reprint)**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 979 (First Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill would establish a College Affordability Study Commission ("Commission") to examine issues and make recommendations concerning the rising costs of college tuition and the increasing amount of debt owed by college graduates. In January 2014, I returned a prior version of this bill without my approval because the then-contemplated commission essentially was an Executive Branch body and its proposed work was redundant of current efforts underway by my Administration. Unlike that version, however, this bill now proposes a commission primarily formed by, and under the purview of, the Legislature.

While I once again commend the Legislature for their interest in addressing issues related to college affordability, this bill should not require the use of executive resources to staff and support the work of the Commission when such work is already being performed by the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education and the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority. Therefore, I am returning this bill with my recommendation that the Office of Legislative Services, not the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education, provide staff and related support services for this legislative Commission.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 979 (First Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

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| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 10:</u> | Delete "12" |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Lines 11-12:</u> | Delete in their entirety |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 13:</u> | Delete "Assistance Authority, or a designee, and" |

Page 3, Section 2, Line 21:

Delete "Office of the Secretary of Higher Education" and insert "Office of Legislative Services"

Page 4, Section 4, Line 32:

Delete "12" and insert "18"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Christopher S. Porrino

Chief Counsel to the Governor