

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Christie Whitman has signed the following piece of legislation:

S-1696, sponsored by Senators William L. Gormley (R-Atlantic) and Wayne R. Bryant (D-Camden/Gloucester) and Assembly Members Guy F. Talarico (R-Bergen) and Joseph Suliga (D-Union), makes it a third degree crime to act as a runner or to solicit or employ a runner to procure clients. This law defines a runner as a person who, for a pecuniary benefit, procures or attempts to procure clients for a legal service provider or a health care provider, whose purpose is to obtain benefits from or assert a claim against an insurance company. The bill requires that a person convicted of this offense be sentenced to prison unless the sentencing court finds that imprisonment would be a serious injustice, which overrides the need to deter such conduct by others.

Specifically excluded from the definition of runners are persons who procure clients and patients through public media advertising or by any other means authorized by law, such as through lawyer or physician referral services. The bill implements a recommendation by the Governor's Task Force on Health Care Fraud.