

# Office of the Governor

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Governor Signs Bills Reigning in Child Support Evaders, Ensures Greater Financial Support for New Jersey Kids**

Gov. Christie Whitman today underscored the important role that parents must play in supporting their children - both financially and emotionally - when she signed two laws that help rein in child support evaders and provide for more strict enforcement of child support orders. The laws will work in conjunction with federal law to ensure uniform enforcement and collection of child support across state lines.

"The sad fact is that too many parents are walking away from the responsibility they have to financially support their children," said Gov. Whitman. "Today, more than \$1.4 billion in child support payments are outstanding. And in too many cases, the taxpayers end up doing what the parent should be doing."

"With this legislation, parents can run, but they can't hide. These laws make it easier to establish paternity, and they make it easier to track down child support evaders, even those who flee across state lines," said Gov. Whitman. "The new laws will help us collect more child support and collect it more quickly."

A-1646, sponsored by Assembly Members Mel Cottrell (R- Burlington/ Monmouth/Ocean) and Rose Heck (R-Bergen) and Senators Wayne Bryant (D-Camden/ Gloucester) and William Gormley (R- Atlantic), implements New Jersey's piece of the Uniform Interstate Family Support Act.

The law is intended to promote more effective collection of child support involving interstate cases, which represent 30 percent of child support cases nationally. Under the bill, New Jersey will have "long arm" jurisdiction over child support evaders, even those living outside state lines.

The law empowers New Jersey, as the state that initiated the court order, to serve as the primary authority on the establishment, enforcement or modification of child support orders. Previous law provided for an interstate process that co-existed with non- interstate filings and resulted in confusion and ineffective enforcement of child support orders.

The new law sets forth guidelines for registration of child support orders in other states and enforcement of collections, including wage withholding orders. The state will now be able to work directly with employers to withhold wages of a responsible parent in other states, instead of having to work through other state agencies.

The Governor also signed A-1645, sponsored by Assembly Members Mel Cottrell (R-Burlington/ Monmouth/Ocean) and Charlotte Vandervalk (R-Bergen) and Senators Wayne Bryant (D- Camden/Gloucester) and William Gormley (R-Atlantic), which strengthens the state's ability to collect child support.

The provisions of the bill include the following:

Allows child support staff to require genetic testing to establish paternity, without a court order

Creates a system that will enable child support officials to access information from financial institutions to freeze and seize assets of people who are behind in child support. Improves the use of technology and existing data bases to evaders. For example, child support staff will be able to check with cable companies to locate subscribers who are behind on child support payments.

Creates a New Jersey Hire Directory that requires employers to register new employees within 20 days of initial employment. Currently, the information is made available only after five months of the initial hire, often too late to collect child support because the evader has already moved on to a new job.

"These new laws will help to improve the day-to-day lives of New Jersey's children," said Human Services Commissioner William Waldman. "And, more effective child support collection may enable a family in need to shorten its stay on the welfare rolls or avoid turning to the welfare system for help at all."

In 1997, New Jersey distributed \$586 million in child support. The state oversees 484,000 child support cases, of which 205,000 cases are for welfare families. The state oversees cases where families have experienced difficulty in collecting child support. Past due child support for active, as well as inactive cases, is over \$1.4 billion.