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## Governor Chris Christie Signs Bipartisan Overdose Protection Act Into Law

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Christie Reaffirms That No Life Is Disposable At Signing With Jon Bon Jovi, Leading Drug Prevention Advocates and Families

**TRENTON** – Acting on his belief that every human life is precious, while fulfilling his commitment to emphasize drug rehabilitation efforts and his different approach to dealing with drug abuse and addiction, today Governor Chris Christie signed the bipartisan Overdose Protection Act (S2082) into law at a drug rehab center in Paterson. The Governor was joined at the bill signing by Jon Bon Jovi, leading drug prevention advocates and family members of individuals lost to drug overdoses.

The legislation takes a two-prong approach to help prevent drug overdose deaths in New Jersey. First, it provides legal protection to people who are in violation of the law while they are attempting to help a drug overdose victim. Secondly, it eliminates negative legal action against health care professionals or bystanders who administer overdose antidotes in life-threatening situations.

"No life is disposable, and this bill represents a giant leap forward in New Jersey's commitment to protecting and preserving all life, particularly when people need it most," said Governor Christie. "As elected officials, it's our obligation to ensure that we are doing everything we can to prevent tragic deaths from drug overdoses, and I believe this bill will do that. I'm grateful that we were able to come together and reach this bipartisan compromise and take meaningful action on this very important issue today."

"On behalf of those individuals and their families whose lives will be saved by this important legislation, I want to thank Governor Christie and the New Jersey Legislature for passing the Good Samaritan bill," said Jon Bon Jovi.

"As someone who has lost my son to an overdose, I know all too well the tragic consequences drugs can have," said Patty DiRenzo, a Blackwood native whose son died from a heroin overdose in 2010. "If people are no longer afraid of getting arrested in overdose situations, they will be more likely to call 911 and get help. This new law will save lives, and I am grateful to Governor Christie and the legislature for all their efforts in making it possible."

"The Overdose Protection Act will help people get treatment faster in life-threatening situations. It is an important tool in our ongoing efforts here in New Jersey to prevent senseless deaths and to get people into treatment" said Dr. Manuel Guantez, CEO of Turning Point, an addiction treatment program in Paterson, NJ that treats more than 2,700 men and women each year.

The bill, which passed the Senate 24-1 on Monday, combines important aspects from the Opioid Antidote and Overdose Prevention Act with the Good Samaritan Act, which Governor Christie recommended changes to in October 2012.

Since 1979, drug overdose death rates in the United States have increased steadily. Naloxone hydrochloride – commonly referred to as naloxone – reverses the effects of opioid drugs, such as heroin, morphine, and oxycontin. Naloxone is most commonly injected intravenously for fastest action, which usually causes the drug to act within a minute, and last up to 45 minutes. A 2002–2004 study referenced by the Center For Disease Control (CDC) found that 50 naloxone programs nationwide had reversed more than 10,000 overdoses.

The new law builds on the Governor's commitment and understanding that drug abuse is a disease to be treated and dealt with not simply from a punitive law enforcement perspective. It comes in addition to the Governor's commitment to expand the Drug Court program across the state, giving those individuals who commit non-violent crime the chance to veer off the path of committing crime to feed a drug addiction. Under this expansion, offenders are required to undergo mandatory drug treatment rather than just necessarily be incarcerated.

Governor Christie has long been supportive of this approach, dating back to his days as a board member of a highly effective youth treatment center, Daytop Village, in his home county of Morris.

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