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Governor Christie Signs Legislation Strengthening State's Fight Against Addiction

Wednesday, October 26, 2016

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Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie today signed legislation to enhance and expand addiction treatment opportunities and improve relationships between law enforcement officers and those suffering from addiction.

"All too often people afflicted with the disease of addiction have negative, counterproductive and repeated interactions with the criminal justice system," Governor Christie said. "This new law allows police officers —often the first people to discover nonviolent drug offenders in their worst state — to become a point of access for help and recovery. This law improves upon access and assistance for those suffering from addiction, helping them to obtain treatment and re-enter society as productive members."

Drug overdose death rates in New Jersey have been reported this year as multiple times higher than increasing national rates.

A-3744/S-2330 (McKeon, Vainieri Huttie, Caputo, Jasey, Downey/Codey, Vitale), with the governor's recommendations from an August conditional veto, provides for the establishment of these law enforcement-assisted addiction and recovery programs in law enforcement departments throughout the State. Under this new law, the Director of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in consultation with the Attorney General, will prescribe by regulation requirements for county and municipal law enforcement departments to establish a program within their departments; develop and implement guidelines for the recruitment and training of law enforcement officers, volunteers, and treatment providers to participate in the program; support and facilitate the linkage of law enforcement assisted addiction and recovery programs to facilities and programs that provide appropriate substance abuse recovery services and health care services; coordinate with law enforcement officials and program volunteers to ensure that individuals seeking to participate in the program are treated with respect, care, and compassion, and are reassured that assistance will be provided; establish requirements for an individual to be eligible for participation in the program; and develop and implement procedures for determining eligibility requirements for the program.

This reform is the latest lifesaving action taken by Governor Christie's administration, to go along with drug court expansion; statewide Narcan and recovery coach program implementation; new legal protections for those helping drug overdose victims; criminal justice reform to put nonviolent offenders on a path to recovery and productivity; the conversion of a correctional facility into a drug treatment center for inmates with addictions; and increased participation in the multistate Prescription Monitoring Program to prevent doctor shopping.

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Press Contact:
Brian Murray
609-777-2600

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Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625
609-292-6000