

August 19, 2013

SENATE BILL NO. 1888

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 1888 with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill would require homeless shelters to admit individuals suffering from mental illness unless the person poses a danger to himself, to others, or to property. Ensuring that the mentally ill are not routinely turned away from homeless shelters is sensible and responsible. Protecting the homeless has been an important goal of my Administration, exemplified by the Executive Order I signed last year creating the Interagency Council on Homelessness, which is tasked with developing a ten-year plan to prevent and end homelessness in this State.

I recommend additional improvements to this bill that will further empower shelters to offer broad aid and services to the homeless. As drafted, the bill fails to provide standards for determining whether a person suffers from a mental illness, and lacks criteria for evaluating a person's potential dangerousness. Adding those guidelines will ensure the safety and well-being of shelter residents, and provide appropriate direction to shelter staff faced with delicate and sensitive decisions as part of the daily service they provide to the community. Together, these improvements will help open wider access to temporary housing, and foster shelter settings that provide essential care and comfort for New Jersey's homeless.

I herewith return Senate Bill No. 1888 and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 1, Line 7:

Delete "An" and insert "No person shall be refused admittance to an"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 7:

Delete "shall admit a" and insert "based on a perception or belief that the"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 8:

Delete "who"

Page 2, Section 1, Lines 8-9:

Delete "and seeks shelter, or food and shelter, at the emergency shelter for the homeless"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 9:

After "unless" insert "there is a reasonable basis to believe that"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 10:

After "property" insert ", or if the basis for the refusal is otherwise authorized by law or regulation"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Charles B. McKenna

Chief Counsel to the Governor