

May 7, 2015

**ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 3970
(Second Reprint)**

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 3970 (Second Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

Just five months ago, I was pleased to sign a package of five bills designed to improve and expand vocational education throughout New Jersey. These new laws are being implemented with remarkable efficiency, and some are already bearing fruit. For example, in January the Department of Education released the 2014 School Performance Reports that, for the first time, measured career and technical education participation in each school district, which amounted to more than 78,000 high school students participating in over 900 approved programs state-wide. Moreover, two weeks ago the Department awarded six county vocational school district partnership grants totaling more than \$2.5 million that will increase access and student opportunities in career and technical education for high school students through partnerships with businesses, industry, and other groups. These efforts, among many others, are advancing my Administration's goal that all students will graduate from high school ready for college and careers.

This bill would authorize county vocational school districts to construct and finance new vocational schools through county improvement authorities. I commend the sponsors for this legislation that features a promising way to streamline the construction and financing of new vocational schools so that county vocational schools can add capacity to meet the strong demand for career-focused programs.

The bill in its current form, however, presents a few minor concerns that should be addressed before it is enacted into law

in order to avoid unintended consequences and to ensure that schools are built properly for the well-being of our schoolchildren. I recommend that the bill simply authorize, rather than require, the use of design-build contracts for school facilities projects. This change will grant county officials the flexibility they need to select the most appropriate contracting method - design-bid-build or design-build - according to the scope of a given project.

Also, our schools must be built in accordance with standards that guarantee safety and high quality. Our children deserve nothing less. Accordingly, I recommend that a county improvement authority follow Schools Development Authority design and building standards for design-build school construction projects.

Accordingly, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 3970 (Second Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

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| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 23:</u> | Delete "shall" and insert "may" |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 24:</u> | After "contract." insert "Whenever a school facilities project is constructed by a county improvement authority through a design-build contract: (1)" |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 26:</u> | After "the" insert "rules and regulations of the" |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 27:</u> | Delete "." and insert "; (2) The county improvement authority shall follow the design requirements and materials and system standards established by the development authority; (3)" |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Lines 30-33:</u> | Delete "be applicable to a county vocational school district school facilities project constructed by a county improvement authority. In the case of a school facilities project constructed by a county |

improvement authority
pursuant to this
section, a" and insert
"apply; and (4) A"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 34:

Delete "be required to"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Christopher S. Porrino

Chief Counsel to the Governor