

January 19, 2016

**ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 4271
(Second Reprint)**

I am filing Assembly Bill No. 4271 (Second Reprint) in the Division of Archives and Records Management without my approval.

Under the provisions of Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, this bill, which was passed within 10 days preceding the expiration date of the second legislative year, does not become law because it was not signed prior to noon on the seventh day following such expiration. While in this circumstance there is no provision for the return of a bill to the Legislature for reconsideration, I believe it is appropriate to express my reasons for not approving this legislation.

Beginning with the statewide expansion of drug courts in 2012 and the Overdose Prevention Act in 2013, I have signed 13 laws to improve the State's efforts to combat substance abuse, including 10 laws in 2015 alone, making New Jersey a national leader on the issue. I am proud that these efforts, among others, are helping people reclaim their lives, and other states are joining the fight against drug abuse. In fact, five states have recently partnered with New Jersey's growing database network, the New Jersey Prescription Monitoring Program, which is helping identify the potential misuse of prescriptions.

While my dedication to addressing substance abuse is strident, I cannot blindly approve any legislation related to this issue. This bill would mandate health benefits coverage for abuse-deterrent opioid analgesic drugs, which are developed so that they cannot be crushed, dissolved, chewed or cut to create a more potent and immediate effect. While the intent of the bill is laudable, the benefits of such drugs are still uncertain in the medical community and are the subject of ongoing research. At least one medical journal, the New England

Journal of Medicine, has concluded that some drug abusers using abuse-deterrent OxyContin, increase their use of other opioids, including heroin. Therefore, it is simply too early to determine whether this bill will accomplish its intended effect. As Governor Cuomo similarly concluded in vetoing an analogous bill, we need to further study this issue.

In addition to the lack of clarity regarding the efficacy of these drugs, abuse-deterrent opioids cost approximately three times more than opioids without these formulations. By all accounts, this bill will cost the State over \$11 million each year, the benefits of which, as noted, are still uncertain.

For these reasons, I have decided to file Assembly Bill No. 4271 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

[seal]

Respectfully,
/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivo
Chief Counsel to the Governor