

May 23, 2016

**SENATE COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR
SENATE BILL NO. 601**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 601 with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill would extend the Work First New Jersey program to allow all individuals convicted of drug offenses, including individuals convicted of drug distribution, to receive general assistance benefits so long as those individuals participate in a licensed treatment program. It also would relieve drug offenders' obligation to participate in a program when there is no program available or when there is good cause for the individual not enrolling.

Since I became Governor, I have been committed to helping those individuals afflicted by the disease of drug addiction to reclaim their lives. I am incredibly proud of the many steps we have taken during my Administration to fight this disease and help the people affected by it become productive members of society. These efforts include expanding drug courts and the lifesaving Narcan program statewide, and integrating job training and services to ex-offenders re-entering society through new drug treatment programs.

I support the sponsors' expansion of treatment programs in which individuals may participate to include licensed outpatient programs. However, I cannot support expanding benefits to those individuals whose convictions include drug distribution. Therefore, I recommend that the bill be amended to limit benefits to those drug offenders whose convictions include only possession or use of a controlled dangerous substance. This modification will provide the flexibility for individuals to

participate in the type of treatment program that works best for them and allows them to transition more seamlessly into the community.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 601 and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 1, Line 45:

After "person" insert "who is convicted of any such offense which has an element the possession or use only of such a controlled substance"

Page 3, Section 1, Line 2:

Delete "shall" and insert "may"

Page 3, Section 1, Line 39:

Delete "residential"

[seal]

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivo

Chief Counsel to the Governor