

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 373

ADVANCE COPY

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 373 without my approval.

This bill requires all public schools to be equipped with a silent alarm linked directly to law enforcement. The bill further requires each alarm to be connected to a red emergency light installed above or near the front entrance of each school, or on the nearest roadway. Finally, the bill requires the installation and activation of these emergency lights and panic alarm systems in approximately 2,500 schools within ten months.

This is the second time this calendar year that the Legislature has presented me with a bill mandating the installation of panic alarms in public schools. As I explained when I previously vetoed this bill, the proposal raises important issues concerning school safety that are best addressed by the body of education and law enforcement professionals that make up the School Security Task Force, whose charge is to study, among other issues, the efficacy of the installation of panic alarms in school buildings. However, rather than work with the Task Force on its review of this proposal, the sponsors have chosen to return it to my desk in identical form a mere five months later.

My position has not changed. I care deeply about the safety of all our students, but I remain concerned that this bill does not adequately address all of the important issues surrounding school safety, such as whether the proposed system is the best mechanism for all schools, whether each local law enforcement entity has the capabilities to monitor such a system, and whether the system's projected expenses for

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installation and monitoring are the best use of resources to protect our children. Nevertheless, I will reserve judgment on the proposal until the School Security Task Force completes its study and issues its findings and recommendations on school security issues, including the installation of panic alarms in school buildings.

Accordingly, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 373 without my approval.

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Christopher S. Porrino
Chief Counsel to the Governor