

**SENATE BILL NO. 993**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 993 with my recommendations for reconsideration.

The New Jersey "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program" ("SNAP"), a joint federal-state partnership, provides many lower-income individuals and families in New Jersey with access to food and nutrition supplies. Under federal law, as a condition of receipt of full SNAP benefits, certain able-bodied adults without dependents ("ABAWDs") are required to engage in a work activity.

Since 2008, pursuant to a blanket waiver provided by the federal government due to the Great Recession, the State has been providing full benefits to all participants, including ABAWDs, without regard to the work requirement. At the end of 2015, however, the statewide waiver expired. In light of the State's steadily declining unemployment rate and consistent with a desire to help benefit recipients achieve independence, my Administration committed to taking active steps to ensure that SNAP participants are able not only to fulfill their work requirements, but to do so through meaningful work activities that are likely to lead to long term employment.

This bill, instead of promoting work participation, which is in the best interests of the recipients and the entire State, would require the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services to apply for a waiver of the work requirement for the State or any area of the State whenever SNAP participants might be eligible under federal law. While I am committed to supporting the SNAP program and ensuring that those individuals in need of benefits receive them, our goal as a State should be to find ways to fulfill the ultimate objective of the work

requirement - to assist individuals in achieving self-sufficiency.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge the sponsors' concern that individuals may lose SNAP benefits for failing to fulfill the work requirement if there are insufficient work opportunities for able-bodied SNAP beneficiaries. Therefore, I am recommending that the bill be amended to require the Commissioner of Human Services annually to review data on labor and employment in the State and then make a decision on whether to apply for a waiver of the work requirement. In addition, I am recommending that the Department of Human Services monitor the success of the current work requirement initiatives by reviewing data on ABAWD SNAP recipients.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 993 and recommend that it be amended as follows:

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| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 8:</u>  | Delete "enactment" and insert "the effective date"  |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 13:</u> | Delete "participants in" and insert "to submit a request for"   |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 14:</u> | Delete in its entirety  |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 16:</u> | After "dependents" insert "participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program"  |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 18:</u> | Delete ", including the"  |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 19:</u> | Delete "unemployment rate in the State and in each area in the State,"  |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 20:</u> | Delete "indicators of a lack of sufficient jobs to provide employment as" and insert "the availability of opportunities that will fulfill the work requirement" |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 21:</u> | Delete "(f)(2)(ii)" and insert "(a)"  |
| <u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 21:</u> | Delete "If the commissioner's review" and insert "Based on the review conducted pursuant to this section, the Commissioner shall determine whether to"          |

Page 2, Section 1, Line 22: Delete in its entirety

Page 2, Section 1, Line 23: Delete "of the State, the commissioner shall"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 23: After "for" insert "a"

Page 2, Section 2, Line 25: After "report" insert "annually over the next three years, with the first report being issued"

Page 2, Section 2, Line 26: Delete "and"

Page 2, Section 2, Line 27: Delete "monthly thereafter,"

Page 2, Section 2, Line 31: After "dependents;" insert "and"

Page 2, Section 2, Lines 32-34: Delete in their entirety

Page 2, Section 2, Line 35: Delete "(3)" and insert "(2)"

Page 2, Section 2, Line 36: Delete "month" and insert "year"

Page 2, Section 2, Lines 37-38: Delete "Beginning with the first report and at least once annually thereafter, the" and insert "The"

Page 2, Section 2, Line 41: Delete "If any area of the State is not covered by a"

Page 2, Section 2, Lines 42-43: Delete in their entirety

Page 2, Section 3, Line 45: Delete "immediately" and insert "on the first day of the sixth month next following the date of enactment"

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Scott A. Coffina

Senior Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor