

SENATE BILL NO. 866
(First Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 866 (First Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

New Jersey's Emergency Assistance Program, administered by the Department of Human Services ("DHS"), provides critical temporary housing services to vulnerable populations in the State as part of Work First New Jersey. Currently, Emergency Assistance ("EA") benefits are capped at 12 months, with narrow extensions.

The bill seeks to extend EA benefits for family caretakers of disabled dependents, the permanently disabled, those over the age of 60, and the chronically unemployable by removing any time limit on the administration of temporary assistance. The bill also requires a significant period of notice prior to any change or termination of benefits.

I thank the bill's sponsors for their efforts in advocating for benefits for individuals in crisis who require housing assistance. The EA program, however, was not intended to provide lifetime housing, and will continue to serve as a poor substitute for more reliable support. I recognize, however, that past and current conditions in the housing market in the State may prevent these individuals from finding more permanent solutions. To address the continuing needs of these individuals, while also attempting to maintain the inherently temporary nature of the program, I have recommended that the bill include a sunset provision so that the extension program terminates five years after the effective date of the bill while allowing time to develop more permanent solutions to this challenge.

During this time, my Administration will remain committed to working towards permanent affordable housing. As part of that commitment, I am directing DHS, the Department of Community Affairs, which oversees the State's affordable housing programs and tracks housing needs, and the Office of Management and Budget to create new opportunities for collaboration and develop enhanced strategies in an effort to address the specific permanent housing needs of this subset of individuals. It is my hope that greater involvement at the initiation temporary assistance benefits will forge a pathway to more stable housing solutions.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 866 (First Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

<u>Page 5, Section 1, Line 3:</u>	After "dependent" insert ", as defined by regulation of the commissioner"
<u>Page 5, Section 1, Line 48:</u>	Delete "one month" and insert "30 days"
<u>Page 6, Section 3, Line 12:</u>	After "immediately" insert ", provided, however, that the provisions of paragraph (3) of subsection a. of section 8 of P.L.1997, c. 14 (C.44:10-51) shall expire on the first day of the 60 th month after the effective date of this act"

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin

Chief Counsel to the Governor