

June 30, 2016

**ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 1657**

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 1657 without my approval.

Today, I signed the Fiscal Year 2017 Appropriations Act passed by the Legislature. For seven years in a row, my Administration has enacted a balanced and responsible budget that maintains fiscal discipline, while providing essential services for all New Jerseyans. The 2017 Appropriations Act, consistent with prior budgets, continues to provide our schools with the greatest levels of funding in our State's history. Delivering this level of financial support to our school children while also maintaining our commitment to responsible fiscal management requires difficult decisions regarding the priorities of our State.

Unfortunately, the Legislature has continued its annual ritual of passing additional bills that irresponsibly allocate taxpayer monies. This is one of those bills. Assembly Bill No. 1657 would require the State to provide an additional subsidy to certain school districts that participate in the federal School Breakfast Program. This additional subsidy is unnecessary because the U.S. Department of Agriculture already subsidizes every school district for every meal provided under this program. In addition, the Legislature allocated \$3 million in its budget for this program, when estimates place the cost at \$6 million. By under-budgeting the program by half while requiring that the necessary funding be provided for the program, the bill would force the State to make a subsequent appropriation that will saddle taxpayers with an additional financial burden.

As I have done every year since taking office, I will not endorse a bill that would force taxpayers to cover additional expenses that are not accounted for in the State budget.

Accordingly, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 1657 without my approval.

[seal]

Respectfully,  
/s/ Chris Christie  
Governor

Attest:

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