

**ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 30
(First Reprint)**

To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 30 (First Reprint) without my approval.

The Work First New Jersey program, New Jersey's welfare reform program, provides cash assistance to low-income families and individuals. This bill would mandate increases to the maximum cash assistance benefit available to Work First New Jersey recipients over three years and then mandate a cost of living adjustment annually thereafter and, in doing so, has substantial budgetary impacts that go beyond Fiscal Year 2017.

Since I became Governor, I have worked hard to maintain a safety net for those individuals most in need. While I understand the sponsors' concern with ensuring adequate assistance for low-income individuals and families throughout the State, New Jersey's current maximum benefit is higher than that in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and this bill fails to recognize the plethora of assistance available in addition to Work First New Jersey cash benefits.

While Work First New Jersey provides individuals with cash assistance, the purpose of the Work First New Jersey program is to end dependency on public assistance by offering tools to help individuals find a job and maintain long-term employment. To ensure program participants are able to pursue employment, Work First New Jersey assists with child care, health care, transportation, emergency housing, and other support services. Additionally, Work First New Jersey beneficiaries may be eligible for other assistance, including but not limited to, food and nutrition supplies through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or WIC; housing assistance through the State

Rental Assistance Program or Section 8 voucher program; energy assistance through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program; and medical assistance through Medicaid and NJ Family Care.

I stand firm in my commitment to providing necessary assistance to those individuals most in need. However, this bill carries substantial costs in this and future budget years and does not account for the breadth of existing programs and assistance to ensure that individuals can meet their most basic needs and have access to tools that help them to find and keep a job.

Accordingly, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 30 (First Reprint) without my approval.

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Respectfully,
/s/ Chris Christie
Governor

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