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## Aug-2-07 Governor Corzine Signs Healthcare Related Legislation

### NEWS RELEASE:

Governor Jon S. Corzine  
August 2, 2007

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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### GOVERNOR CORZINE SIGNS HEALTHCARE RELATED LEGISLATION

**SOUTH PLAINFIELD** - Governor Jon S. Corzine today signed three healthcare related bills at the South Plainfield Senior Citizen Center.

The first, S2580/A4179, requires hospitals to implement an infection prevention program to eliminate antimicrobial-resistant infections and requires hospitals to report cases of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Arueus (MRSA) to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

"Each year, two million patients in this country become infected with MRSA after entering the hospital," said Governor Corzine. "Staph infections are highly avoidable and having this prevention program in place to protect patients is a matter of good public health policy for New Jersey."

Under the legislation, it will be mandatory for all general hospitals to implement an infection prevention program in their intensive care units. If a hospital has no intensive care unit, the program should then be implemented in another high-risk unit where there is significant risk of facility-acquired infections.

"According to the Centers for Disease Control, MRSA has become the dominant cause of hospital staph infections over the past three decades, rising from 2% of all reported cases in 1974 to more than 63% of all cases in the United States," said Senator Buono, D-Middlesex. "Fortunately, there are simple, proven ways to reduce the prevalence of this infection, saving countless lives. Once again, New Jersey is leading the way in making sure our residents have the best health care possible."

"MRSA infections can be a death sentence for patients with compromised immune systems, such as the elderly," said Senator Vitale, D-Middlesex, the Chair of the Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee. "We want our hospitals and healthcare facilities to be as safe as possible. This new law will go a long way to protecting the State's most vulnerable patients from these drug-resistant, hospital-acquired infections, and improve the overall safety of New Jersey's health care system."

"Changing the way hospitals treat infections in their own buildings would close a troublesome safety gap in our state's health-care safety net," said Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein (D-Middlesex). "Stronger measures are needed to counteract the insidious threat of drug-resistant superbugs."

"At a time when drug-resistant infection strains are on the rise around the globe, we need our laws to keep abreast of disturbing trends in the health care system so patients' safety is never overlooked and never compromised," said Assemblywoman Linda Stender (D-Union).

"Drug-resistant superbugs are the new public enemy number-one in health-care facilities all across the country," said Assemblyman Herb Conaway, Jr., M.D. (D-Burlington), one of only two physicians in the state Legislature. "The containment procedures prescribed under this law will help hospitals fulfill their missions of saving lives and preventing disease."

"Infections prolong illnesses and injuries," said Assemblyman Robert Gordon (D-Bergen). "Uniform procedures to contain the spread of drug-resistant strains will help hold down health-care costs and save lives."

Sponsors of the legislation were Senator Barbara Buono (District 18); Senator Joseph Vitale (District 19); Assemblywoman Linda Greenstein (District 14); Assemblywoman Linda Stender (District 22); Assemblyman Herb Conaway, Jr. (District 7) and Assemblyman Robert Gordon (District 38).

Governor Corzine also signed A3817, which establishes a three year-pilot program to conduct comprehensive eye examinations for second grade students.

"By implementing this program, we hope to minimize the number of children whose vision problems too often go undetected, resulting in their being categorized as special education students," said Governor Corzine.

"Eye-screening will help ensure that children with undiagnosed vision impairments are not incorrectly classified as needing to be enrolled in special education classes," Assemblyman Patrick Diegnan (D-Middlesex) said. "There are indications that a growing number of parents of students with poor eyesight are erroneously being told their child needs placement in a special education program."

Primary sponsors of the legislation were Assemblyman Patrick Diegnan (District 18) former Assemblyman (current Parole Board Chairman) Peter Barnes (District 18), Assemblyman Joseph Malone (District 30) and Assemblyman Joseph Vas (District 19).

Governor Corzine also signed A1190, which requires the placement of organ donation information and materials at public institutions of higher education.

"Organ donation saves lives by offering hope to those afflicted with organ failure," Corzine said. "This legislation will boost public awareness of its benefits and increase participation in donation programs across the state."

"Every effort that we make to promote organ donating helps to save lives," said Diegnan. "Advances in medical science now allow for a wide variety of organ transplants, but more needs to be done so rates of organ donations can keep pace with the scientific advances."

Primary sponsors of the legislation were Assemblyman Patrick Diegnan (District 18) and Assemblyman Douglas Fisher (District 3).

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Photos and audio and video clips from Governor Corzine's public events are available in the Governor's Newsroom section on the State of New Jersey web page, <http://www.nj.gov/governor/news/>



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