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Office of the Governor
NEWS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR SIGNS LEGISLATION APPROPRIATING \$3.5 MILLION FOR SYSTEM TO COMBAT CHILD ABDUCTIONS

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed legislation, which appropriates \$3.5 million to the Department of Law and Public Safety for the establishment of a state program to assist local enforcement agencies in combating child abductions.

"The safety and well-being of our children is of paramount importance and it is something that never can be taken for granted," said Gov. Whitman. "Through this program, local law enforcement agencies will be able to use state-of-the-art technology to trace missing and abducted children, recover them and return them to their parents or guardians as quickly as possible."

The program will be coordinated by the State Police, which will establish and operate a technology center to assist local law enforcement agencies in responding to reports of abducted children. The bill authorizes any municipal law enforcement agency that wishes to secure access to the State Police technology center to apply to the Attorney General for state aid to purchase the appropriate computer technology to permit such access.

Under the legislation, the technology utilized should be a type endorsed by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The technology should include a system to send and receive highly recognizable color and black and white photographic images of missing and abducted children, and a forced delivery system that provides for the spontaneous, automatic reception of photographic images of missing children by all participating law enforcement agencies and forces.

The legislation also requires the system to be user-friendly and readily compatible with existing systems.

The bill appropriates \$3.5 million to the Department of Law and Public Safety from the undesignated surplus balances in the Safe Neighborhoods Services Fund. It stipulates that if the undesignated balances are not sufficient to fund the appropriation, the amount should be provided from the General Fund.

The legislation, **S-6**, was sponsored by Senators Donald T. DiFrancesco (R-Middlesex/Morris/Somerset/Union) and John J. Matheussen (R-Camden/Gloucester) and Assembly Members Christopher Bateman (R-Morris/Somerset) and Paul DiGaetano (R-Bergen/Essex/Passaic).