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NEWS RELEASE

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DiFrancesco Signs Law to Creating Fight Domestic Violence Victims Fund *Commits \$100,000 from Governor's Contingency Fund for Immediate Start up*

Acting Governor Donald T. DiFrancesco signed legislation today creating the Domestic Violence Victims Fund, providing support services for victims of domestic violence. DiFrancesco also announced an immediate transfer of \$100,000 from the Governor's Contingency Fund as seed money to get the program running immediately.

"Today I signed legislation that creates the Domestic Violence Victims Fund so victims of domestic violence can receive the support they need to recover. In addition, I authorized an immediate transfer of \$100,000 from the Governor's Contingency Fund, so we can start providing these essential services right away, said the acting Governor.

"The long term funding for this program comes from fines imposed on individuals found guilty of domestic abuse, the very people responsible for the problem. This innovative new funding mechanism puts the burden of the cost of domestic violence where it belongs."

The new law enables courts to impose civil penalties of between \$50 and \$500, based on the nature and degree of injury suffered by the victim, on persons found to have committed acts of domestic violence. The assessments will be deposited into the Domestic Violence Victims Fund and used to provide shelter services, legal assistance and other support related programs.

"This legislation came out of a recommendation from the Assembly Advisory Task Force on Domestic Violence, which was chaired by Assemblywoman Rose Heck. It is a very creative approach to a problem that we wish did not exist," said DiFrancesco.

"Assemblywoman Rose Heck has been a strong and effective voice for crime victims and especially the victims of domestic violence. Advocates for the victims of Domestic Violence know how hard she worked to pass this bill. It certainly wouldn't have happened without her leadership," said DiFrancesco.

The bill, A-1500/S-183, was signed at the Alternatives to Domestic Violence in the Bergen County Administration Building. It was sponsored by Assemblywoman Rose Heck (R-Bergen) and Senators Kevin O'Toole (R-Essex/Union), Diane Allen (R-Burlington/ Camden) and Edward O'Connor (D-Hudson).