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RELEASE: July 13, 2005

Codey Signs Bill to Dramatically Expand Health Coverage for Uninsured Children and Parents in New Jersey

(TRENTON) – Acting Governor Richard J. Codey today signed S2236/A3724, legislation that will expand eligibility for the NJ FamilyCare program.

“Today, we will reopen the NJ FamilyCare program to parents for the first time in three years,” Codey said. “We are another step closer to making health care in New Jersey affordable and available to everyone.”

The bill signing was held at the Children's Specialized Hospital in Hamilton. Codey was joined by bill sponsors Senator Joseph F. Vitale (D-Middlesex) and Assemblyman Robert Lewis Morgan (D-Mercer and Middlesex) and the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services James M. Davy.

The bill's primary sponsors are Senator Joseph F. Vitale (D-Middlesex), Senator Barbara Buono (D-Middlesex), Senator Wayne R. Bryant (D-Camden and Gloucester), Assemblyman Robert Lewis Morgan (D-Mercer and Monmouth), Loretta Weinberg (D-Bergen), Robert M. Gordon (D-Bergen), John S. Wisniewski (D-Middlesex), Joan M. Voss (D-Bergen), Mary T. Previte (D-Camden) and Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-Mercer).

"With NJ FamilyCare, we are meeting our humanitarian obligation of providing accessible, quality health care to all New Jerseyans," said Vitale (D-Middlesex). "Health care is not a privilege for the financially secure -- it is a right that we must defend for every resident of this State, regardless of personal income. All of our State's children and New Jersey's working-class families deserve decent health coverage, and a revamped NJ FamilyCare will put us within reach of that goal."

"We really should commend everyone who has worked over the last year to make it possible to pass this law today," said Buono (D-Middlesex). "Because of their work, the program is more efficient, more responsive and better able to provide free and low-cost health care to New Jersey's working families. A year from now, tens of thousands more New Jerseyans will be leading better lives because FamilyCare has the resources to provide the preventative care needed for a healthy lifestyle."

"As the author many of the State's laws to help provide a hand-up to many of New Jersey's low income families, I am proud to be a sponsor of this legislation," said Bryant (D-Camden, Gloucester). "This Family Care law is a step forward in New Jersey's fight to help keep its families safe and healthy."

"Our goal in creating this legislation was to allow for streamlined enrollment of eligible children; more efficient retention of children within the system, and the extraction of administrative savings so that we spend less on bureaucracy and more on health care for children and their families," said Morgan (D-Mercer, Middlesex). "The signing of this bill into law represents a significant turn for the better for healthcare in New Jersey."

New Jersey's FamilyCare program began as NJ KidCare in 1998. It was expanded and renamed NJ FamilyCare in 2000. The goal of this program is to provide health insurance for low-income children and parents whose family incomes are too high for them to be eligible for traditional Medicaid but also too low for them to be able to participate in a private or employer-sponsored health insurance program. In June of 2002 budgetary concerns forced the state to freeze enrollment for parents and adults.