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RELEASE: August 26, 2005

## **Codey Signs Bill Protecting Teens, Raising Age Requirement for Bike, Skate Helmets**

(TRENTON) – Acting Governor Richard J. Codey today signed A3346/S2529 requiring anyone 17 years of age or younger to wear a helmet while bicycling, skateboarding, roller skating or blading. The bill amends a pre-existing law that went into effect in 1992, when New Jersey became the first state in the nation to require bicycle helmets for children under 14. New Jersey now joins California and Massachusetts as the only states requiring helmets until the age of 17.

“It is a proven fact that helmets save lives,” said Codey. “Yet, eighty percent of New Jersey’s high school students do not wear a helmet when riding a bike,”

“One little mistake while biking or skating can lead to a life-altering brain injury and a lifetime of tragedy for a family,” added Codey. “As parents and lawmakers, we must do everything in our power to protect the interests of our children.”

Codey signed the bill in Brick Township. He was joined by bill sponsor Assemblyman John F. McKeon (D-Essex) as well as Brick Township Mayor Joe Scarpelli and Tom Grady, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs for the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey. Other sponsors of the bill include Assembly members Upendra J. Chivukula (D-Somerset) and Brain P. Stack (D-Hudson) and Senator Shirley K. Turner (D-Mercer).

“Our current law has already saved countless parents the horror of seeing their child die from a head injury sustained while biking or roller blading,” added McKeon. “But the need to wear a helmet does not expire on a child's 14th birthday. In fact, teenagers are more apt to pick up their level of activity as they exert their independence and should be protected equally from traumatic brain injuries as their younger counterparts.”

According to the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, in the five years prior to the initial law (1987-1991), there were a total of 41 reported bicycle-related fatalities for children age 13 and under in New Jersey. For the five years after the law went into effect, that number dropped drastically to 16. However, for children 14 and over, 75 and 71 bicycle-related fatalities were reported for those two time periods, respectively.

“The purpose of helmets and other protective gear is to help prevent traumatic brain injuries. There is simply no excuse for our youngsters to go out without wearing a helmet,” said Senator Turner. “It's a fact of life that teenagers don't always make the best decisions

when it comes to their own personal safety. By extending the minimum age for wearing helmets, we will improve their safety during these critical years and hopefully encourage them to adopt these healthy habits for a lifetime.”

The law will require that all children 17 and under wear a properly fitted and fastened bicycle helmet, which meets the requirements of the American National Standards Institute or the Snell Memorial Foundation’s 1990 Standard for Protective Headgear for Use in Bicycling. The law will also require anyone in the business of selling or renting bicycles, skateboards, roller blades or skates to post a sign at the point of transaction notifying patrons of the law.

“We must reinforce the message that the need to wear a helmet carries no expiration date,” said Chivikula. “Children and teens who wear helmets are more apt to become adults who wear helmets.”

“Children need to protect not only themselves from debilitating injury, but their families from being forced to deal with a tragic accident,” said Stack.

The law will go into effect next spring. For additional safety tips, visit the NJ Division of Highway Traffic Safety’s website at <http://www.nj.gov/lps/hts/index.html> .