

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

Contact: Kelley Heck
609-777-2600

RELEASE: March 23, 2005

Codey Signs Bill to Improve Medical Care for Minorities

New Law Requires Cultural Competency Training for Doctors

(STRATFORD) – Acting Governor Richard J. Codey today signed legislation that will improve medical care for minorities by requiring cultural competency training for New Jersey physicians.

“We have an obligation to recognize the unique needs of our diverse community, and one area where we need to be especially sensitive to the needs of minorities is health care,” Codey said during a ceremony at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's School of Osteopathic Medicine.

Codey said it is important for physicians to know that asthma, hypertension, AIDS, Sickle Cell Anemia and several types of cancer affect minorities at greater rates. Health care professionals also must be aware of unique cultural beliefs that may affect the health care decisions their patients make, he said.

“This new law will help provide equality in medical care by requiring that New Jersey physicians take special training to diagnose and treat conditions that are prevalent among minorities,” Codey said.

The bill, S144, requires New Jersey physicians to take cultural competency training in order to obtain a medical license from the State Board of Medical Examiners. Physicians who already have their medical licenses will need to complete the training as a condition of renewing their licenses.

“The practice of denying critical care to patients is both immoral and unfair, and it is time to end the discrimination,” said Senator Wayne R. Bryant, D-Camden and Gloucester, the bill's sponsor. “This new law shows that the State is concerned with ending health care disparities and is working to solve the issues plaguing minority patients.”

“It is the responsibility of New Jersey's health sciences university to prepare culturally competent health care providers, who now, as a result of this legislation, will be provided with educational programs to help them keep abreast of the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to care for New Jersey's diverse population,” said Dr. Maria Soto-Greene, chief of staff and vice president of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

UMDNJ is developing a Center of Cultural Competency that will establish training programs to

address the needs of an array of professionals at the medical school and throughout New Jersey.