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## **Codey Signs Bill Recognizing Foreign Adoptions**

(MONTCLAIR) – Acting Governor Richard J. Codey today signed Assembly bill 1992, which amends New Jersey family law to specifically recognize foreign adoptions.

“Adoptive parents open their arms to the world’s neediest children and provide homes where these children find warmth, affection and love,” Codey said. “Families that adopt foreign children should be celebrated and supported. They should not have to fight bureaucracy just because their adopted child is from another country.

“This bill makes it clear,” Codey continued. “New Jersey recognizes foreign adoptions. We want families to know they are welcome in New Jersey. We are here to make things easier – not harder – during this very special time in their lives.”

Codey was joined by bill sponsors Sen. Nia Gill and Assembly Majority Conference Leader Loretta Weinberg along with Montclair resident John Lytle, father of two adopted daughters from China.

“This bill makes New Jersey family law consistent with the spirit of the Federal Child Citizenship Act,” said Gill (D-Essex, Passaic). “Families will no longer have to go through a process of re-adopting their children who are already recognized by the federal government as U.S. citizens. It makes sense that our state should grant the same protections to our children and families.”

New Jersey law regarding foreign adoptions was previously unclear. The law did not specifically recognize foreign adoptions nor did it explicitly not recognize them. The ambiguity caused confusion and resulted in many parents having to repeat the adoption process.

The new law eliminates this ambiguity and allows New Jersey to treat adoptions occurring in foreign countries the same as adoptions occurring in the United States. This saves parents time and money and relieves the courts of unnecessary work.

It is also in keeping with federal law, which automatically grants citizenship to children adopted abroad.

“This legislation protects the integrity of families, whether they are formed in the United States or another country,” said Weinberg (D-Bergen) “This is more than good public

policy; it's a commitment to children and families that are the critical threads in the fabric of our country. This ensures that adopted children are never treated as second-class citizens in the eyes of the law."

The new law does not prohibit parents from going through the re-adoption process if they choose. In those cases, the law does not require a written consent statement from the natural birth parents.

Lytle advocated for the bill after recognizing the hassles fellow adoptive parents were experiencing in obtaining birth certificates for their children.

"This legislation makes New Jersey family law friendlier toward international adoption," Lytle said. "This continues a trend at the federal and state level to encourage adoption. Let us seek more ways to continue this trend and encourage adoption."

Assemblywoman Mary Previte (D-Camden) is also a primary sponsor of the bill. Co-sponsors include Sens. John Adler (D-Camden) and Barbara Buono (D-Middlesex), and Assemblymen Jack Connors (D-Burlington, Camden) and Herbert C. Conaway Jr. (D-Burlington, Camden).

New Jersey is now the 30th state to specifically recognize foreign adoptions.