

## Dec-19-06 Governor Corzine Signs Legislation Establishing Needle Exchange Pilot Programs

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### GOVERNOR CORZINE SIGNS LEGISLATION ESTABLISHING NEEDLE EXCHANGE PILOT PROGRAMS

**TRENTON** – Governor Jon S. Corzine today signed the “Bloodborne Disease Harm Reduction Act,” which allows up to six municipalities to establish needle exchange programs as part of a demonstration project. The bill also appropriates \$10 million for drug treatment.

“Quite simply, this bill will save lives,” said Governor Corzine. “The science is clear: Needle exchange programs have been proven effective in reducing the spread of HIV and hepatitis C and serve as gateways to treatment.”

The demonstration project requires that municipalities interested in participating adopt an ordinance and that participants in the needle exchange program be given information and referrals for HIV counseling and testing, drug abuse treatment programs and health and social services.

“Today ends New Jersey's dubious reign as our nation's only hold-out on progressive and common-sense policies that will save lives,” said Speaker Joseph J. Roberts, Jr. (D-Camden). “Now we can begin to reverse our state's near-epidemic rates of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. The needle exchange programs and enhanced access to addiction treatment we authorize today are a glimmer of hope to many who may otherwise have known only death and despair.”

“Today we have taken responsibility to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in this state by making access to clean needles part of our comprehensive strategy to combat this public health epidemic,” said Senator Nia H. Gill, (D-Essex), a Senate sponsor of this legislation.

The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) will establish the parameters of the needle exchange program by regulation. The Commissioner of

the Department of Human Services is required under the legislation to develop a plan to create and fund regional drug abuse treatment facilities.

"This is a great day for public health in New Jersey," said DHSS Commissioner Fred M. Jacob, M.D., J.D. "This legislation gives us another weapon in the growing arsenal we now have to fight harder to save lives and prevent HIV transmission."

New Jersey has the highest rate of cumulative HIV/AIDS cases among women, the third highest rate of pediatric HIV/AIDS cases, the fifth highest rate of adult HIV/AIDS cases and a rate of injection-related HIV infection that is nearly twice the national average.

The legislation (S-494/A-1852) was also sponsored in the Senate by William L. Gormley and in the Assembly by Francis J. Blee, Reed Gusciora, Wilfredo Caraballo, Peter J. Barnes Jr., Alfred E. Steele and William D. Payne.