

December 5, 2016

**SENATE BILL NO. 51  
(Second Reprint)**

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 51 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

This is not a bill; it is ill-informed, politically motivated press release by a prime sponsor who proves once again, that he has no idea about law enforcement or what is being done by the very department he proposes to further regulate.

This bill seeks to resolve a problem that does not exist in New Jersey, because the Department of Corrections ("DOC") in this Administration does not utilize isolated confinement, as contemplated by the bill. In fact, it was this Administration that ended disciplinary detention as a sanction. But why would the facts ever interfere with the sponsors' political agenda?

As recognized by both the federal government and the National Association of State Correctional Administrators, there are legitimate penological, safety, and security reasons for placing certain restrictions on an inmate's movement within a correctional institution. Primarily, an inmate may be segregated from the general population when medically necessary or to ensure the safety and security of the segregated inmate, other inmates, or correctional officers and staff. In some circumstances, inmates voluntarily choose to be placed in these units for their own protection.

To that end, DOC operates specialized, segregated housing units where inmates live in more restrictive settings than the general population. Placement in these units is carefully considered, and where appropriate, is guided by medical and

mental health professionals considering the individual health conditions of an inmate while balancing the need to protect other inmates and staff. DOC employs significant safeguards to ensure due process, facilitate periodic reviews of the assignment, and lay out a clear path for return to the general population. Importantly, all inmates in DOC facilities, regardless of housing status, have access to social services and chaplaincy services as well as medical, dental, and mental health services.

During our administration, DOC has taken major steps to further reduce inmates' exposure to restrictive housing and expand the services available to those inmates who are placed in restrictive housing for legitimate reasons. This bill would eliminate DOC's restrictive housing units, severely limiting DOC's ability to ensure a safe environment for inmates and correctional staff alike. Additionally, the bill would eradicate procedures established by DOC to ensure inmates placed in restrictive housing units are afforded individualized consideration and proper due process.

The irresponsibility of this bill, and the resulting peril in which it could place both inmates and corrections officers every day, is truly breathtaking. This is the danger of legions of Democratic legislators blindly following the rhetoric of prime sponsors who typically legislate by bumper sticker slogans. If they had taken the time to ask a few questions, or to do even the most rudimentary investigation into current DOC procedures and policies, we would have avoided wasting any time on this partisan and juvenile bill which shows their complete lack of understanding of how DOC operates our facilities at the behest of this Administration.

In conclusion, this bill would undo much of the progress that DOC has made to reduce exposure to restrictive housing, jeopardize the safe and secure operations of correctional facilities, and severely restrict DOC's ability to perform its daily functions.

Accordingly, I am returning Senate Bill No. 51 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

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Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Scott A. Coffina

Senior Deputy Chief Counsel to the Governor