

SENATE BILL NO. 2479
(Second Reprint)

To the Senate:

More than two months ago, I stated my support for tuition equality. I offered to work with the Legislature on agreeing on affordable tuition equality for all students in New Jersey during the lame duck session. As the Legislature took up this issue, I emphasized the discrete, but significant, issues that must guide a new in-state tuition program. Well before this bill was passed by either House of the Legislature, I publicly and clearly stated the terms under which I would sign this bill. Regrettably, those issues were never addressed. Therefore, as I have previously advised the members of the Legislature, pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I return Senate Bill No. 2479 (Second Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration. I implore the Members of the General Assembly and the Senate to act immediately so that this bill may be signed into law without further delay and allow these students to avail themselves of this opportunity in January of 2014.

The concept of tuition equality springs from larger efforts to reform our Nation's immigration laws. While various approaches have been considered, those discussions have not resulted in progress. That failure is a timely reminder of the new course charted by my Administration. In New Jersey, our approach is straightforward: we confront problems, we debate solutions, we come to an agreement, and we move on to the next challenge. That simple formula for achieving compromise still eludes the leadership in Washington. As a result, our country's system of lawful immigration remains broken, with no path forward towards reform and progress.

In the vacuum created by the failed attempts at immigration reform, many states confronted a related issue: in-state college tuition for students without lawful status. These students, who typically arrived in the United States with their parents as

children, face a daunting economic impediment to reaching their full potential. Having already invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in these students' K-12 education, as mandated by existing law, it is sensible to offer these students in-state tuition. Ensuring that higher education is available to these students likewise ensures future generations of children will be able to reach their full productive potential as successful members of our communities and be able to even more fully contribute to our society.

I do not, however, support the additional provision of this bill that goes beyond tuition equality and makes students without legal status eligible for any financial aid program administered by the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority or the Secretary of Higher Education. Making New Jersey a magnet for out-of-state students is fiscally imprudent and wholly unwise. Expansions to funding programs must always be carefully calibrated, and thoughtfully balanced against the reality of limited revenues, competing priorities, and sound planning for the needs of all citizens. Expanding financial aid in the manner proposed by this bill meets none of those standards, and serves only to drive enrollment from out-of-state students, at the expense of in-state residents. Today, I once again recommend that this unnecessary provision be removed.

First and foremost, I must stand as the guardian against renewed abuse of the taxpayers in New Jersey. Making New Jersey a magnet state by offering financial aid would diminish the amount of aid available to New Jersey students or place an unacceptable burden on our taxpayers. I will not allow either to happen through enactment of this legislation.

Revising this bill to enact tuition equality without unnecessary financial burdens on the taxpayers of New Jersey is neither complicated, nor controversial. With this single change, tuition equality will become the law of our State. I ask the Legislature to

join me in this important reform, and make equal tuition for all New Jersey students a reality this year.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 2479 (Second Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

- Page 2, Title, Line 1: Delete "and financial aid"
- Page 2, Title, Line 2: Delete "and chapter 71B"
- Page 2, Section 2, Lines 37-43: Delete in their entirety
- Page 3, Section 2, Lines 1-17: Delete in their entirety
- Page 3, Section 3, Lines 19-21: Delete in their entirety and insert "2. This act shall take effect immediately."

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Charles B. McKenna

Chief Counsel to the Governor