SENATE BILL NO. 3776
(Second Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 3776 (Second Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill creates a Chronic Absenteeism Task Force ("task force") to study current and pre-pandemic absenteeism data, analyze root causes of chronic absenteeism, examine the impact of mental health and school climate on chronic absenteeism, understand the role of COVID-19 exposure and student discipline policies, research best practices in other states, and develop recommendations on ways to address chronic absenteeism.

I applaud the bill's sponsors for seeking ways to continue to address the problem of chronic absenteeism in our schools. The task force will complement efforts the Department of Education ("Department") is already undertaking to provide school districts with resources and support, including by incorporating research and analysis on pre- and post-pandemic absenteeism statistics into the Department's State Plan, under the federal "Every Student Succeeds Act."

While I fully support the creation of this task force and believe it will provide valuable contributions to the work that is already underway to reduce chronic absenteeism, I am recommending a few, modest revisions to help support the task force and ensure it has sufficient time to complete its work. The problem of chronic absenteeism is complex and the bill rightly charges the task force with undertaking a comprehensive review of its causes, as well as providing recommendations for its mitigation. Moreover, the composition of the task force — at 20 members — may make it difficult to reach consensus within the timeframes established by

the bill, particularly on such a multi-faceted issue. I am therefore recommending amendments to provide additional time for the task force to report on its findings and recommendations by changing the deadline back to one year, as it existed in the original iteration of the bill. This is merely an outer limit and will not prohibit the task force from issuing the report sooner should it complete its work early.

My recommendations also grant discretion to the Governor with respect to the appointment of four of the task force's members. Although this reduces the number of members appointed upon the recommendation of certain organizations accordingly, the organizations represented on the task force remain unaltered. Finally, my recommendations provide that all proposed nongubernatorial appointments instead be made by the Governor upon the recommendation of the various organizations represented and the Legisalture in order to align with the requirements of the New Jersey Constitution.

Therefore, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 3776 (Second Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 1, Line 13:	After "appointed" insert "by the Governor upon recommendation"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 14:	After "appointed" insert "by the Governor upon recommendation"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 15:	After "appointed" insert "by the Governor upon recommendation"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 16:	After "appointed" insert "by the Governor upon recommendation"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 18:	Delete ", who" and insert ". Eleven of the 15 public members"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 19:	Delete "two members" and insert "one member"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 20:	Delete "two members" and insert "one member"
Page 2, Section 1, Line 23:	Delete "two members" and insert "one member"

Page 2, Section 1, Line 25:	Delete "two members" and insert "one member"
Page 3, Section 1, Line 2:	After "force." insert "A majority of the authorized membership shall constitute a quorum.
Page 3, Section 1, Line 6:	Delete "shall also be entitled to call to its" and insert "may request the"
Page 3, Section 1, Line 6:	Delete "avail itself of the"
Page 3, Section 2, Line 32:	Delete "six months" and insert "one year"

Respectfully,

[seal]

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Kate E. McDonnell

Chief Counsel to the Governor