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FOR RELEASE:

June 18, 2009

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WATSON COLEMAN/CRUZ-PEREZ/JASEY/EVANS/GUSCIORA BILL TARGETING HOMELESSNESS ADVANCES

(TRENTON) – Legislation to give counties the ability to establish grant programs to provide affordable housing and support services for the formerly homeless and those at risk of losing their home today passed the full Senate.

The bill (A-3101) is sponsored by Assembly Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-Mercer) and Assembly members Nilsa Cruz-Perez (D-Camden), Mila Jasey (D-Essex), Eleese Evans (D-Passaic) and Reed Gusciora (D-Mercer).

“The number of homeless, in New Jersey – especially women and children – is unacceptably high and may go even higher as more families face the very real and scary prospect of losing their homes to foreclosure,” said Watson Coleman (D-Mercer). “State and local governments must work together to provide more funding and better services to provide access to affordable housing and ensure families have another option to living in a shelter or on the street.”

The bill would permit counties to create homeless prevention trust funds and establish grant programs to address homelessness. The trust funds would be financed through a document recording surcharge not to exceed \$3 dollars per recorded document.

Grants awarded by the county would be used to support projects that demonstrate government cost savings over time, are capable of being replicated in other counties and are consistent with local homelessness housing plans.

Watson Coleman said that funds not spent within four years would be transferred to the New Jersey Intragency Council on Homelessness, which would contract with community-based organizations to help safeguard families from homelessness.

The measure passed the Senate 30-6. It will now head back to the Assembly for final legislative approval.

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