



# ASSEMBLY DEMOCRATS NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR RELEASE:**

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## **WATSON COLEMAN / CRUZ-PEREZ / JASEY / EVANS / GUSCIORA & POU BILL ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS SIGNED INTO LAW**

(TRENTON) – Legislation sponsored by six Assembly Democrats to give counties the ability to establish grant programs to address homelessness was signed into law today by Gov. Jon S. Corzine.

The law (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), Eleise Evans (D-Passaic), Reed Gusciora (D-Mercer) and Nellie Pou (D-Passaic).

“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,” Watson Coleman said. “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.”

“In today’s global economy even people who work hard and play by the rules can find themselves homeless through no fault of their own,” Cruz-Perez said. “I am excited that we are empowering counties to help New Jerseyans put a dependable roof over their heads.”

“This is a forward-looking measure, as the grants awarded by the counties are required to demonstrate government cost savings over time,” Jasey said. “Helping people afford homes eliminates long-term government costs and stabilizes our towns and cities.”

“Everyone knows that finding affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges for New Jerseyans,” Evans said. “That’s why our anti-homelessness measure tackles permanent housing for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness through rental assistance and supportive and preventative services so key to keeping families in homes.”

“Our measure does more than reduce homelessness,” Gusciora said. “It also supports those on the precipice of being homeless, which is why I’m especially enthusiastic about the supportive services that will help families at risk of becoming homeless.”

“We know that each homeless person has a unique hurdle between them and the American Dream,” Pou said. “Decentralizing this housing assistance ensures that more personalized attention can be given to each homeless person.”

The measure passed the Assembly and Senate in June.

It permits counties to create homeless prevention trust funds and establish grant programs to address homelessness. If the counties so choose, the trust funds will be financed through a document recording surcharge not to exceed \$3 dollars per recorded document.

Money will be used for:

- the acquisition, construction or rehabilitation of housing projects or units within housing projects that supply permanent affordable housing for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness;
- rental assistance vouchers, including tenant and project based subsidies, for affordable housing projects or units within housing projects that provide permanent affordable housing for homeless persons or families, including those at risk of homelessness;
- supportive services as may be required by homeless individuals or families to obtain or maintain, or both, permanent affordable housing; and
- prevention services for at risk homeless individuals or families so that they can obtain and maintain permanent affordable housing.

Grants awarded by counties will be used to support projects that:

- measurably reduce homelessness;
- demonstrate government cost savings over time;
- employ evidence-based models;

- can be replicated in other counties;
- include an outcome measurement component;
- are consistent with the local homelessness housing plan; or
- fund the acquisition, construction or rehabilitation of projects that will serve homeless individuals or families for a period of at least 30 years or equal to the longest term of affordability required by other funding sources.

Funds not spent within four years will be transferred to the Department of Community Affairs to contract with a community based organization in the same county where the fund exists to help safeguard families from homelessness.

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