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FOR RELEASE:

Feb. 5, 2009

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ASSEMBLY PASSES FISHER/BURZICHELLI/EVANS BILL CREATING 'NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON CHILD POVERTY'

Lawmakers Redouble Efforts to Develop State Plan To Address Impoverished Children

(TRENTON) – The Assembly today approved legislation Assemblymen Douglas Fisher and John Burzichelli and Assemblywoman Elease Evans sponsored to create a council on child welfare and social service that would develop a statewide plan to reduce child poverty

The measure (A-1411) was developed in reaction to the release of the annual “Kids Count” report by the Association for Children in New Jersey that reported no progress had been made in raising families out of poverty and near-poverty during the past five years. It also found the rates of children living at all levels of poverty have remained static.

“The disturbing fact is that too many New Jersey children are being forced to survive in deplorable living conditions,” said Fisher (D-Cumberland/Salem/Gloucester). “We must bring the state’s leading voices together to identify the best services and programs that will most effectively improve the quality of life for all New Jersey children in need. New Jersey cannot lose more children to the insidious cycle of poverty.”

Under the measure the plan would;

- Identify and analyze data on the occurrence of child poverty in the state;
- Analyze the long term impacts and costs of poverty on children and their families, their communities and state and local government agencies and community-based organizations that provide services to the poor;
- Inventory programs that address child poverty throughout the state, the percentage of the population living in poverty served by such programs, the amount of money provided by the state to fund such programs and any deficiencies in such programs.

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- Establish procedures and priorities for achieving a 50 percent reduction in child poverty in the state within 10 years.

“With one-in-four single parent families in New Jersey living below the poverty line, we need to create an action plan to lift people up,” said Burzichelli (D-Gloucester). “Our working families can barely survive on these incomes.”

The lawmakers noted the urgent need for the council as the deepening economic recession threatens to push many more at-risk children into poverty.

“We must do everything we can to help our working families by ensuring that our state’s resources are directed to those New Jerseyans that are most in need of a helping hand,” said Evans (D-Passaic).

The measure was passed 67-9, with 2 abstentions and now goes to the Senate for further consideration.

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