To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Senate Bill No. 515 with my recommendations for reconsideration.

This bill concerns continuing education requirements for physicians and veterinarians and would require the appropriate licensing board to accept volunteer services provided by a licensee in lieu of completion of a portion of the continuing education requirement.

While I commend the sponsors for the salutary goal of encouraging physicians and veterinarians to volunteer their services during this difficult economic time when many are unable to afford medical care for themselves or their animals, I am concerned that the fundamental purpose of continuing education is not necessarily served by provision of volunteer services.

I am also concerned that the bill imposes substantially different standards for physicians and veterinarians for the substitution of volunteer service for continuing education requirements. The bill would require the State Board of Medical Examiners to waive 10% of the 100 continuing education credits currently required by law for physicians while at the same time requiring the State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to waive 50% of the required 20 continuing education hours for veterinarians. Further, the bill would authorize physicians to offer a range of volunteer medical services while limiting veterinarians to a small number of procedures, namely the spaying and neutering of cats and dogs.
Despite my concern that the goals of continuing education are not necessarily advanced by volunteer services, I recognize that in these particularly challenging times there is a need to encourage volunteer service in these fields to ensure the health and wellbeing of our citizens and their animals.

Therefore, I recommend that these two licensing boards be given the discretion to determine an appropriate level of required continuing education and the authority to allow volunteer services to offset up to 10% of that continuing education requirement. Further, I recommend that veterinarians not be limited to providing only spaying and neutering procedures as volunteer services and that the provision of services be limited to those in need, to shelters and pounds licensed by the Department of Health and Senior Services or to municipally approved managed cat colonies, to ensure there is appropriate housing and medical care for the animals being treated.

Accordingly, I herewith return Senate Bill No. 515 and recommend that it be amended as follows:

Page 2, Section 1, Line 15: Delete “100” and insert “a requisite number of”

Page 3, Section 1, Line 9: Delete “shall” and insert “may”

Page 3, Section 1, Line 9: Delete “of the required 100” and insert “percent of the requisite number of”

Page 4, Section 2, Line 41: Delete “20” and insert “the requisite number of”

Page 4, Section 2, Line 42: After “education” insert “as determined by the board”

Page 6, Section 3, Line 10: Delete “shall” and insert “may”

Page 6, Section 3, Line 10: Delete “of the not less than 20 credits”

Page 6, Section 3, Line 11: Delete “for” and insert “percent of the”
Page 6, Section 3, Line 12: Delete “spaying or”

Page 6, Section 3, Lines 13-18: Delete “neutering services provided by a veterinarian in accordance with subsection c. of this section, at the rate of one hour of continuing veterinary education credits for every two spayed cats or dogs, or a combination thereof, and one hour of continuing veterinary education credits for every four neutered cats or dogs, or a combination thereof,” and insert “volunteer veterinary services rendered by licensees, at a rate of one half of one hour of continuing veterinary education for each hour of volunteer veterinary services,”

Page 6, Section 3, Line 20: After “section.” insert “In addition, the board may adopt a formula providing that a minimum number of spaying or neutering procedures that shall be deemed the equivalent of one hour of continuing veterinary education.”

Page 6, Section 3, Lines 33-37: Delete “c. A veterinarian shall be eligible to offset up to 10 of the required 20 or more credits for continuing veterinary education for rendering spaying or neutering services free of charge, without receiving compensation from any source for the rendering of such services,” and insert “As used in this section “volunteer veterinary services means veterinary care provided without charge”

Page 6, Section 3, Line 41: After “(2) a” delete “municipality or nonprofit group or organization that is” then insert “shelter or pound licensed by the
Delete "operating a program of trapping, spaying or neutering feral or stray cats, and releasing the spayed or neutered feral or stray cats," insert "or a municipally approved managed cat colony,"

After "organization" insert "managing the cat colony"

After "neutered" insert "or otherwise treated"

Respectfully,

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Jeffrey S. Chiesa

Chief Counsel to the Governor