To the General Assembly:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 4265 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

This bill would permit local governments to require that members of their police and fire departments live in the municipality or county in which they are employed for the first five years of their employment. Applicants would have six months from the date of employment to move into the jurisdiction. The local government would be permitted, but not required, to create an exception if the employee or a member of his or her family suffers injury or a threat of injury as a means of intimidation, due to his or her employment as a police officer or firefighter.

For many years, our State law has prohibited municipalities from enacting broad-based residency requirements for police officers and firefighters due to the unique role that these public servants perform in our society. Without question, police officers and firefighters provide critical public safety services that are essential to the health, safety, and welfare of our citizens. Accordingly, I am wary of any proposal that would place unwarranted restrictions on these public servants, expose them to unnecessary hardships, or jeopardize their safety. Because this bill would only serve to reduce the pool of applicants for these important jobs and needlessly increase the burden borne by those who swear to protect and serve the citizens of this State, I cannot sign it.
Accordingly, I am returning Assembly Bill No. 4265 (Second Reprint) without my approval.

Respectfully,

[seal] /s/ Chris Christie
Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivo
Chief Counsel to the Governor