

ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 2455
(First Reprint)

To the Senate:

Pursuant to Article V, Section I, Paragraph 14 of the New Jersey Constitution, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 2455 (First Reprint) with my recommendations for reconsideration.

Assembly Bill No. 2455 (First Reprint) creates a three-year pilot program that provides grant funding to encourage and support school districts to establish For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology ("FIRST") nonprofit organization's robotics programs and to participate in a FIRST Robotics Competition. The purpose of the pilot program is threefold: 1) to increase opportunities for students to participate in FIRST Robotics Competitions; 2) motivate students to pursue education and career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics ("STEM"); and 3) improve students' knowledge in the fields of STEM.

I applaud the Legislature's desire to further robotics education and increase exposure to competitive robotics experiences for the students of New Jersey. However, the bill inappropriately singles out one organization, thereby foreclosing the possibility of other nonprofits participating in the program. In order to ensure that our State dollars are invested efficiently and pursuant to a fair and competitive grant process, eligibility for participation in the program should be expanded to include any nonprofit with a demonstrated ability to inspire students through mentor-based programs in STEM.

Therefore, I herewith return Assembly Bill No. 2455 (First Reprint) and recommend that it be amended as follows:

<u>Page 2, Section 1, Lines 9-10:</u>	Delete "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) nonprofit organization's"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Lines 11-12:</u>	Delete "a FIRST Robotics Competition" and insert "robotics competitions"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Lines 13-14:</u>	Delete "a FIRST Robotics Competition" and insert "robotics competitions"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 19:</u>	After "b." insert "(1) The Commissioner of Education shall

identify one or more eligible nonprofit organizations to assist school districts selected to participate in the pilot program in developing robotics programs and participating in robotics competitions. The commissioner shall compile a list of eligible nonprofit organizations available to partner with school districts and incorporate the contents of the list into the application created pursuant to paragraph (2) of this subsection. Nonprofit organizations included on the list shall offer technical assistance to participating schools, including mentor-based assistance in establishing a robotics program to develop science, technology, engineering, and mathematical skills for students. A school district that applies to participate in the pilot program shall partner with a nonprofit organization on the list. (2)"

<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 30:</u>	After "are" insert "appropriated by the State or"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 32:</u>	Delete "a FIRST"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 33:</u>	Delete "program" and insert "programs"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 34:</u>	Delete "FIRST nonprofit organization" and insert "commissioner"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 37:</u>	After "to" insert "develop robotics programs in which school districts partner with an approved nonprofit organization that has demonstrated its ability to inspire students through mentor-based programs to build science, technology, engineering, and mathematical skills whereby funds may be used to"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 40:</u>	After "funding" insert "in separate grant application periods"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Line 42:</u>	Delete "FIRST"
<u>Page 2, Section 1, Lines 44-45:</u>	Delete "The commissioner shall collaborate with the FIRST nonprofit organization" and insert "Nonprofit organizations"
<u>Page 3, Section 1, Line 1:</u>	After "businesses" insert "may collaborate"
<u>Page 3, Section 1, Line 2:</u>	After "section." insert "The donated funds shall only be used for the purpose of supporting grants under the program. Such funds shall be accepted by the Department of Education to be used for the purposes of the"

program. If sufficient funding is unavailable, the pilot program shall be paused and shall resume once funding becomes available to support the issuance of grants under the program. e. There is established within the Department of Education a fund to be known as the "Robotics Competitions in Schools Fund." The fund shall be credited only with funds appropriated by the State or funds donated for the purposes of the pilot program established under this section. The fund shall only be used to provide grants to school districts selected for participation under the pilot program."

Page 3, Section 1, Lines 3:

[seal]

Delete "e." and insert "f."

Respectfully,

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor