

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
ASSEMBLY BILL NO. 457**

Assembly Bill No. 457, which I have signed today, expands the "New Jersey Compassionate Use Medical Marijuana Act," N.J.S.A. 24:6I-1, et seq., to include post-traumatic stress disorder ("PTSD") as a debilitating medical condition for which medical marijuana may be authorized.

Following the tragic events on September 11, 2001, the United States has vigorously fought terrorism beginning with Operations Enduring Freedom ("OEF") and Iraqi Freedom ("OIF"). As a result of over a decade of active combat, the United States military has seen the largest number of PTSD cases in several generations. The National Center for PTSD within the United States Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that up to 20 out of every 100 veterans who served in OEF or OIF have PTSD.

PTSD is a debilitating medical condition affecting the ability of the men and women who have served our country to lead normal lives. Throughout the country significant resources are being used to research PTSD and increase access to traditional treatments, such as psychotherapy and antidepressant medications. This bill would provide struggling veterans and others with the ability to use medical marijuana to treat PTSD, but only after it has been determined by a physician or psychiatrist that conventional medical therapy is ineffective.

Requiring conventional medical therapy to be ineffective in treating PTSD before medical marijuana can be prescribed is an appropriate threshold safeguard to deter misuse in the Medical Marijuana Program. However, in order to further deter abuse, I am directing the Commissioner of the Department of Health to promulgate additional regulations that provide clear objective criteria regarding the use of medical marijuana for PTSD. Nevertheless, the mere potential for abuse by some should not deter the State from taking action that may ease the daily struggles of our veterans and others who legitimately suffer from PTSD. Accordingly, I am approving inclusion of PTSD as a debilitating medical condition in the Medical Marijuana Program.

Date: September 14, 2016

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivero

Chief Counsel to the Governor