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SMITH BILL ESTABLISHING SICK LEAVE BANKS FOR TEACHERS ADVANCES

TRENTON - A bill sponsored by Senator Bob Smith which would permit the creation of sick leave banks for school employees was approved today by the Senate today by a vote of 35-0.

"Sick leave banks give employees the flexibility they need should they fall seriously ill and need extra time to recuperate," said Senator Smith, D-Middlesex and Somerset. "They give teachers and other school staff a chance to prepare for the unexpected, and to have a safety net for worst case scenarios. Sick leave banks put the focus on the employee's health, not the health of their bank account, when they're dealing with a long-term illness or injury."

The bill, S-548, would allow for the establishment of sick leave banks for employees of a board of education. With a sick leave bank in place, employees could draw needed days of sick leave in addition to any days to which they would otherwise be entitled. Under the bill, a sick leave bank could only be created with the approval of the board of education and a majority or union representative, and it would be prohibited from requiring employees to participate.

"Under the bill, a sick leave bank could only be created with the support of both the school board and the employees' representative," said Senator Smith. "We wanted to make sure that these agreements were in the best interest of everybody, and by requiring dual approval, I think we've accomplished that. Also, we've left some flexibility in the bill for what these sick leave banks would look like, so that the agreements would be adaptable to the needs of the school district."

The bill now heads to the Assembly for consideration.