

CJ Griffin Quoted in Articles Regarding NJ Supreme Court Opinion Limiting Ability of Police Officers to Pull Over Drivers For License Plate Frame Violation

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CJ Griffin, Director of the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, was quoted in several articles discussing the recent New Jersey Supreme Court consolidated opinion involving the interpretation of a statute that makes it illegal to drive a vehicle “which has a license plate frame . . . that conceals or otherwise obscures any part of any marking imprinted upon the vehicle’s registration plate.”

The Court held that police may no longer stop drivers if their license plate frames only partially cover markings on the plate. In one case, the license plate frame barely covered roughly 10% of the bottom of the words “Garden State” on the plate and the Court held that such was not a violation of the law because one could still read what the plate said. In contrast, in the second case, the frame covered the entire phrase “Garden State” and the Court held that was a violation of the statute. While not discussed by the Court, State Police data shows that Black and Latino drivers were disproportionately stopped for this violation.

From New Jersey Monitor:

Attorney C.J. Griffin, who filed an amicus brief and argued before the Supreme Court in the case, applauded the ruling.

“This is a good decision for New Jerseyans, because hundreds of thousands of us are driving around with these frames on our cars and have no idea we’re violating the statute,” Griffin said. “This ruling will largely put an end to that. You can now only be stopped if entire words are obscured.”

Griffin and [Karen]Thompson [senior staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union] both noted that the ruling fell short in addressing the racial disparities in such “pretextual stops,” which they said disproportionately target Black and Latino drivers.

“That’s the problem with pretextual stops — people of color are disproportionately subjected to them, whether because of overt discrimination or implicit bias on the part of the officer,” Griffin said.

From the Asbury Park Press:

CJ Griffin, the director of the Stein Public Interest Center, who filed an amicus, or friend of the court, brief in the Roman-Rosado case on behalf of the Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey, said efforts against pretextual policing shouldn't stop with the high court's ruling.

“The Legislature needs to study all of the laws on the books that police use to make pretextual stops,” Griffin said in a statement. “Racial profiling is still very much alive in New Jersey and we need to take concrete steps to limit the discretion of police to pull people over for these minor non-moving violations.”

To view the article in the Asbury Park Press, [click here](#).

To view the article on newjerseymonitor.com, [click here](#).