

CJ Griffin Quoted in Article on the Use of the Emergency Health Powers Act to Deny Document Requests During Coronavirus Crisis

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CJ Griffin, Director of the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, was quoted in a Star Ledger article, "Requests for N.J. public records rejected during coronavirus crisis as Murphy administration uses little-known law." The article discusses the unexpected development of State agencies citing the 2005 Emergency Health Powers Act to reject requests for public records relating to the State's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

CJ Griffin, an attorney who runs a public-records blog in New Jersey, argued that transparency is even more essential "during a war and during a public health crisis" because misconduct is more likely in those times.

"And the public is starving for information now," Griffin added. "They want to have confidence in government."

Griffin said agencies that were already good about providing records are "still really good" in the wake of the law — but ones that weren't good are "to the point of almost ignoring OPRA altogether."

For example, the attorney said officials in Newark — the state's largest city— have said they will respond to requests within 60 days of Murphy ending his executive order.

"I find that completely unreasonable," Griffin said.

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