

CJ Griffin Quoted in New Jersey Monitor on Toxic Culture Revealed in Newly Released Records in Elizabeth Probe

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CJ Griffin, Director of the Justice Gary S. Stein Public Interest Center at Pashman Stein Walder Hayden, was quoted in the New Jersey Monitor article, “Newly released records in Elizabeth probe offer peek into toxic culture of policing.” The article discusses the newly released 21-page report about the behavior of the former Elizabeth Police Director, who resigned in 2019 after several Elizabeth officers filed complaints against him. The report was released as a result of the landmark victory Griffin secured on behalf of a former police officer in March 2022, when the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that while police internal affairs reports are not subject to the Open Public Records Act, such reports should be released under the common law right of access.

The details in the 21-page report about former police director James Cosgrove’s behavior — issued with numerous redactions — show why there should be more transparency around police disciplinary records, said CJ Griffin, an attorney who helped fight all the way to the New Jersey Supreme Court for the document’s release.

“It’s just so damning to read that one of the witnesses said a toxic workplace is part of the profession,” Griffin said. “There’s so much secrecy around internal affairs investigations and the workplace culture can be so toxic for officers that it becomes very hard for them to speak out.”

The Cosgrove records show that a lot of people were aware of the former director’s behavior and feared retaliation for speaking out, Griffin said.

“What the police departments have traditionally argued is that they need this secrecy because no one will speak out if there’s not secrecy,” Griffin said. “But now, they have secrecy — and no one was speaking out.”

Griffin has represented the New Jersey Monitor in various legal matters.

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