

CJ Griffin Quoted in NJ Spotlight News discussing NJ Supreme Court Ruling Resulting in More Public Oversight and Greater Accountability in Police Disciplinary Matters

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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 *NJ Spotlight News* article, "Police internal affairs records can be made public." The article discusses the recent New Jersey Supreme Court victory in which Griffin represented the plaintiff seeking the internal affairs records of the director of the Elizabeth Police Department who had been found to violate Elizabeth's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies. While acknowledging that police internal affairs reports are not subject to the Open Public Records Act, the NJ Supreme Court held that such reports should be released under the common law right of access. The Court also set forth factors that public agencies and trial courts should consider when deciding whether to release internal affairs reports. The Court reversed the Appellate Court decision and ordered the trial court to release the records, with appropriate redactions.

"I believe this decision will significantly expand access to internal affairs records, at least with records relating to serious misconduct," said attorney CJ Griffin, who represented the former police officer who requested the document, referring to instances involving excessive force, discrimination, domestic or sexual violence, or lying. "We may still have to sue because police departments are sadly so secretive, but I think trial courts will grant access as a result of today's decision."

Griffin called the decision "a sweet victory" for her and Rivera, with whom she has litigated more than 50 lawsuits regarding police records.

“Today’s decision will give the public and reporters more tools to dig deeper into police misconduct and to ensure that internal affairs complaints are investigated fairly and thoroughly,” she said. “Until now, these reports have been shrouded in complete secrecy, but now there will be a big ray of sunlight and, with that, more public oversight and greater accountability.”

While the decision will help bring more of these records into the public eye, Griffin also used it as an opportunity to renew the call of many open-records advocates and police reformers for the state Legislature to “open up internal affairs files” through the simpler OPRA process, as states such as New York and Florida have done.

To view the full article, click here.

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2022/03/nj-supreme-court-ruling-elizabeth-police-director-public-internal-affairs-records-racist-sexist-behavior/>