CJ Griffin Quoted in northjersey.com On Failure to Disclose Information On COVID Deaths in Veteran Homes

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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 *northjersey.com* article, "Vet families still await Murphy promise of 'full accounting' 2 years after COVID disaster." The article discusses the Murphy administration's failure to release information regarding COVID deaths at the three state-run veterans homes in New Jersey. Griffin represented northjersey.com in its lawsuit to obtain records after northjersey.com's request under the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) was denied. While the administration eventually turned over some documents, almost all of them were completely redacted.

"Overall, when it comes to anything relating to COVID or other public health issues, the Murphy administration has been super tight-lipped," said CJ Griffin, a Hackensack attorney who focuses on public records access and represented NorthJersey.com in its lawsuit. "I have had to write many objection letters and to sue multiple times on behalf of various requestors just to get some basic transparency.

"It's important that journalists be able to see how our public employees responded to the COVID crisis so that mistakes are exposed and responses can be improved next time," Griffin said.

The article further notes that the Murphy administration has often used the "deliberative" exemption in OPRA, which open-government advocates view as "among the biggest and most abused loopholes in the law, because the government can claim that just about any piece of information can be used in making decisions — even if those decisions have already been made."

"We need transparency, so I hope that the state will start voluntarily releasing these communications under the common law to provide answers as to what went on in those homes," said Griffin, NorthJersey.com's attorney in the case.

To view the full article, click here.