

CJ Griffin Quoted in Star Ledger Editorial Board Opinion That New Police Transparency Effort Falls Short

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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 Star Ledger Editorial Board Opinion, “This police transparency effort is welcome. But it falls short.” The Opinion describes the new searchable dashboard of police internal affairs statistics launched by the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office as a laudable stride, but opines that legislation is needed to provide access to the actual records and to permit towns and counties to form Civilian Complaint Review Boards with subpoena power. The Opinion also discusses 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.

Attorney CJ Griffin is even less impressed:

“This database is very much working within the old system of secrecy, with statistics that aren’t tied to any officer or any particular file,” the police transparency expert said. “There is still no ability to check under the hood of these investigations or see whether these statistics are correct, and no way to see whether the investigations reached the right outcome.”

Six months ago, Griffin won a case in which the Supreme Court ordered the release of IA reports on Elizabeth’s former top cop, James Cosgrove, who resigned in 2019 after Union County’s prosecutor confirmed that he had used racist and sexist language toward employees.

The Court ruled that police disciplinary records were no longer exempt from our open records laws when the public interest outweighs the need for confidentiality. That ruling was acclaimed as an inflection point.

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