

Partners Joe Hayden and Brendan Walsh Serve as Special Counsel to New Jersey Legislative Select Oversight Committee

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Partners Joe Hayden and Brendan Walsh Serve as Special Counsel to New Jersey Legislative Select Oversight Committee; Co-Author Report Concerning the Hiring of Albert J. Alvarez as Chief of Staff at the New Jersey Schools Development Authority

In October 2018, the General Assembly of New Jersey retained PSWH partners Joe Hayden and Brendan Walsh to represent it in connection with the New Jersey Legislative Select Oversight Committee's investigation into the response by Governor Phil Murphy's transition team and administration to Katie Brennan's sexual assault allegation against Albert Alvarez. At the time of the alleged assault, Mr. Alvarez was working as a senior staffer on the Murphy for Governor campaign. He went on to serve as deputy director of personnel for the Governor-elect's transition team and then as chief of staff at the New Jersey Schools Development Authority ("SDA"). Ms. Brennan volunteered on the Murphy for Governor campaign, served on a transition advisory committee, and went on to serve, and continues to serve, as chief of staff at the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency.

The committee reviewed thousands of pages of documents and received sworn testimony from fourteen fact witnesses and two experts over the course of nine days of public hearings before issuing its Report on June 5, 2019. In its Report, co-authored by Mr. Hayden and Mr. Walsh, the committee concluded that the Murphy transition and administration "seriously mishandled the matter by failing to conduct an immediate investigation and by deciding to place Mr. Alvarez at the SDA without a full understanding of the facts." "Transition leadership should have immediately conducted a thorough and rigorous investigation into the allegation," the Report stated,

adding, “the people entrusted with properly and responsibly handling Ms. Brennan’s complaint failed her at every step of the way.” The committee also concluded that “some witnesses provided evasive or misleading testimony.”

The Report includes nine recommended changes to law and policy, including, but not limited to, amending the Gubernatorial Transition Act to provide added protections to transition workers, providing for civil service oversight of the SDA, granting future transition teams more resources to perform background checks into applicants, creating questionnaires for applicants about criminal charge/investigation against them, and establishing a hotline for discrimination/harassment complainants.

No committee member voted against the Report. The Senate Republicans also issued their own statement joining in the Report, but expressing their view that the committee should have investigated other potentially questionable hiring decisions and employment practices at the SDA generally.

To read a copy of the report - [**CLICK HERE**](#)

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