

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Expanding Access to Temporary Protective Orders

07/24/2023

TRENTON – In a continued effort to support victims of domestic violence, Governor Phil Murphy today signed S-1517, authorizing the issuance of protective orders for certain victimized persons in situations for which domestic violence statutes do not apply due to lack of familial or dating relationship between the victim and offending actor. Specifically, the bill provides greater protections to individuals who have been victimized through abusive behavior, regardless of their current or prior relationship status to the alleged actor, by expanding the eligible acts for which a protective order may be obtained.

The bill also amends the “Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act of 2015 ([“After hearing the horrifying stories of victims, like Michele Albano’s daughter – who inspired this bill – our Administration recognized the need to expand access to protective orders to more than just victims of domestic and sexual violence,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Far too many individuals fall victim to different kinds of abuse and are unable to escape it because of their lack of ability to attain a protective order against their abusers. Today, we hope to give these victims some relief and assurance that we are with them and we support them.”](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/fxsqsj/nrddit/nj7m34__!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!KQb49SgHzb-7yD8BcPi9pCYIrVNwShvBDt6CqLZJhXG0pOArIGxzbUYXuNFjdu57LJ18PjiFbtVvcxk_SUoI4qIDnvTI$) (SASPA) to be known as the “Victim’s Assistance and Survivor Protection Act” protecting all victims of abusive behavior, and expands the list of prohibited acts that qualify a victim to receive a protective order from an abuser to include stalking and cyber-harassment.</p>
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“No one should ever have to live in fear of another person,” **said Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin**. “For too long, New Jersey didn’t give stalking victims the means to seek protection from strangers who meant them harm. By signing this bill into law, Governor Murphy has moved our state in the right direction, expanding the legal protections available to New Jerseyans and underscoring our commitment to keep our residents safe.”

“I am thankful that Governor Murphy signed S-1517 into law today, a bill I have advocated for on behalf of my daughter for the last 14 months,” **said Michele Albano**. “S-1517 would not have been possible without Senator Jon Bramnick, who stood by my family throughout the whole ordeal, and who became a passionate advocate for this bill. I am grateful that Assemblywomen Muñoz and Matsikoudis also signed on and supported my family’s advocacy. I am hopeful this will bring relief to the many NJ residents that are stalked by strangers.”

“While most stalkers tend to be current or former partners, in nearly one fifth of cases the perpetrator is a stranger. Stalking can go on for months or even years, forcing people to live in fear with no legal recourse until the situation escalates,” **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. “This law will empower victims to take legal action and obtain a restraining order, providing them with a crucial tool to proactively protect themselves before a stalking situation escalates.”

“Governor Murphy just signed a life-saving bill that will increase protections for victims of stalking who do not have a prior relationship with the defendant,” **said Senator Jon Bramnick**. “In too many instances, the police have been unable to do anything when extremely dangerous or threatening behavior is reported. This new law will make it easier for more victims to get protective restraining orders before frightening conduct escalates to actual harm.”

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“Domestic violence is an often hidden, brutally dark stain on our society. Abusers often isolate their victims, forcing

them to feel unsupported and devastatingly alone. We have a responsibility to support those among us who are most vulnerable, ensuring that at every stage, survivors have the resources and protections necessary to see justice realized," **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. "With this law, we can ensure individuals in our state are safe from abusers who previously were not closely enough related for the state to offer protections."

"In today's digital world, stalkers can threaten and harass strangers for years and years without ever coming into physical contact with them. The law is now on the side of victims seeking protection through the courts. Victims who have been targeted by strangers, neighbors and acquaintances will finally be able to experience the peace of mind that protective orders provide. This is not only an example of good governance, but an example of working together for the good of all New Jerseyans. I would like to thank Governor Murphy for signing S1517/A2770 into law, and my legislative partners for their leadership on this important initiative," **said Assemblywoman Michele Matsikoudis**.

"The New Jersey State Bar Association was honored to work with the sponsors on this important legislation, which extends the availability of protective orders to victims of stalking and cyber harassment and provides important protections to ensure the fair administration of justice. We express our thanks to the bill's sponsors and Gov. Murphy for their leadership in steering this important law into reality," **said Lisa Chapland, Esq., Senior Managing Director of Government Affairs, NJ State Bar Association**. "This legislation addresses an important gap in our laws. Before this bill was proposed, the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act required there to be a relationship between the individuals before a restraining order could be issued. This bill provides protection for victims even if acts of stalking and cyber harassment happen where there is no relationship between the parties. The Victim's Assistance and Survivor Protection Act (VASPA) also resolves a gap that existed in the Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act (SASPA), as it provides much needed protections where an actual sexual assault has not occurred or been attempted, but a victim is experiencing the very real threat of assault through stalking and cyber harassment."

"The new law as written offers restraining order protections to survivors of stalking or cyber harassment against people they never dated nor lived with in the same household. This new law carefully and compassionately fills a gap we recognize was left open in 2015 when the Sexual Assault Survivor Protection Act was enacted to parallel our domestic violence restraining order system. Students in a course I teach at Rutgers Law School studied this precise issue; I am honored that Senator Greenstein and the slate of co-sponsors worked with us and found our expertise and research useful as they completed the final version of this important bill. And thank you to Governor Murphy for signing into law such vital protection for the people of New Jersey," **said Ruth Anne Robbins, Professor of Law, Rutgers University**.

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