

Governor Phil Murphy



Governor Murphy Announces Division of Consumer Affairs Director Paul Rodríguez to Join Biden-Harris Administration

01/20/2021

Attorney General Grewal Names Kaitlin Caruso Acting Director of the Division

TRENTON– Governor Phil Murphy today announced that Paul R. Rodríguez, Director of the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs, will be departing from his role and joining the Biden-Harris Administration. Attorney General Gurbir Grewal has named Kaitlin Caruso as Acting Director of the Division effective immediately.

Rodríguez, who has led the State's consumer protection agency since June 2018, will immediately begin serving as Deputy General Counsel to the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). HHS promotes the health and well-being of all Americans, fostering advances in the sciences underlying medicine, public health, and social services. The agency plays a critical role in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been a focus of Rodríguez's work in New Jersey over the last year.

"Since his appointment in 2018, Paul Rodríguez has been a tireless advocate for New Jersey's most vulnerable and provided the Division of Consumer Affairs with the requisite expertise and vision to navigate the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic," **said Governor Murphy**. "Paul's counsel and professionalism will be a strong addition to the Biden-Harris Administration, and I thank him for his dedication to the betterment of our state."

"Paul Rodríguez has led the Division of Consumer Affairs with remarkable skill, agility, and determination, protecting consumers from those who would prey on them and working to ensure New Jerseyans have access to healthcare when they need it most," **said Attorney General Grewal**. "Throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, Paul has demonstrated true leadership during a time of crisis, bringing out the best in his staff, expanding the capabilities and scope of the Division, and fighting to promote equity and protect the most vulnerable. We will miss him and his commitment to his home state, but I know he will be a great asset to the Biden-Harris Administration and to all Americans."

Before being appointed to lead the Division of Consumer Affairs in 2018, Rodríguez served as Acting Counsel to the Mayor of New York City, as a projects specialist for U.S. Senator Frank R. Lautenberg, and as an associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP in New York City. The New Jersey Senate unanimously confirmed Rodríguez as Director of the Division last year.

Under Rodríguez's leadership, the Division has focused on investigating and pursuing complex cases with far-reaching implications across industries, particularly pursuing those who target the most vulnerable.

During his tenure, the Division has:

- Been integral to the Governor's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, initiating emergency programs to significantly expand the healthcare workforce, expanding scopes of practice, eliminating barriers to telehealth, and imposing workplace safety standards, and aggressively pursuing price gouging and purveyors of false COVID-19 treatments and unauthorized tests.
- Taken a multi-pronged approach to combatting the opioid epidemic in the state by suing opioid manufacturers, revoking the licenses of indiscriminate prescribers, setting rules to promote responsible prescribing, revamping technology platforms to give prescribers the tools they need to care for their patients on the frontlines, and operating the State's prescription drug monitoring and consumer take-back programs.
- Filed several major enforcement actions aimed at protecting vulnerable consumers, including suing a Medicaid advisory company that abandoned its clients, a student loan servicer that misled borrowers, a series of sham mortgage relief companies and related nonprofits that failed to provide relief for their customers, a lender that provided cash advances to small businesses owners by deceptive means, and subprime auto sellers who sold and repossessed the same vehicles multiple times.
- Worked to protect members of New Jersey's diverse immigrant community, including through a statewide enforcement initiative that targeted businesses claiming to offer immigration services they were not trained or authorized to provide, and through implementation of legislation signed by Governor Murphy to prohibit lawful presence in the United States as a qualification to obtain a professional or occupational license.
- Initiated reforms to increase healthcare equity, respond to allegations of licensee sexual misconduct, reduce collateral effects of incarceration among those seeking professional licenses, and quickly implement recent legislation to allow individuals, regardless of immigration status, to obtain professional licensure.
- Pursued gun and ammunition distributors offering and selling illegal ghost guns and high capacity magazines to New Jersey residents without disclosing they could face criminal charges for purchasing or owning weapons prohibited in the State.
- Improved the Division's website to streamline the complaint process and increase electronic filing, and overseen the ongoing transition from paper to fully online applications for business and charity registrations, and professional and occupational licensing applications.

Bio – Kaitlin Caruso, Acting Director:

Kaitlin Caruso joined the Division in 2018 as Deputy Director for Policy and Strategic Planning. While serving in that capacity, Caruso also served for a period as Acting Deputy Director for the Office of Consumer Protection. Immediately prior to joining the Division, Caruso chaired the Strategic Advocacy Committee at the New York City Law Department. She also previously worked in that Department's Legal Counsel Division, for the New York City Council, in the Office of the Counsel to the Mayor of New York City and as an Assistant Attorney General in the Consumer Fraud Bureau of the Illinois Attorney General's Office.

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