

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Names Terry Schuster to Lead the Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson

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TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today announced he intends to appoint Terry Schuster as the head of the New Jersey Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson. As re-envisioned in the Dignity Act, signed into law by Governor Murphy in January 2020, the Corrections Ombudsperson investigates complaints and conducts regular inspections of the Department of Corrections' 11 adult prison facilities, monitoring conditions of confinement; serious incidents like deaths, sexual assaults, and applications of force; as well as medical and mental health care, programming, and family visitation. The office is directed to collect and analyze data, hold public hearings, and make systemic findings and recommendations for reform.

"I am proud to name Terry Schuster as the new Corrections Ombudsperson," **said Governor Murphy**. "Terry's successful professional track record in securing transformational outcomes within the criminal justice and corrections fields made him a clear choice for this role. I look forward to the contributions he will make to improve the lives of the people incarcerated in our state correctional facilities."

"Thank you to Governor Murphy for this honor, and to the lawmakers who envisioned this new role in the Dignity Act," **said Terry Schuster, the newly appointed Corrections Ombudsperson**. "I believe the solutions to problems like institutional violence are built on good will, diplomacy, and listening to the people who work and live in our state prisons. I'm grateful to the Ombuds staff and Advisory Board, Commissioner Kuhn, and others who will help me learn this new landscape and who I know are committed to rehabilitation and dignity in corrections. Let's get to work."

"I am very pleased to welcome Terry Schuster as the new Corrections Ombudsperson and thrilled to have his expertise advocating for the rights and treatment of incarcerated persons," **said New Jersey Department of Corrections Acting Commissioner Victoria Kuhn**. "Mr. Schuster's knowledge of criminal justice policy and history in monitoring correctional systems will ensure that concerns raised by justice-involved individuals are appropriately and objectively addressed."

Schuster previously served as a manager for The Pew Charitable Trusts (Pew) Public Safety Performance Project, where he oversaw a team of data and policy analysts spearheading state and national campaigns to safely reduce correctional populations. In partnership with correctional administrators and advocates, Schuster and his team helped bipartisan coalitions pass and implement 10 bills in Louisiana that have safely reduced the state's prison and probation populations, and 20 bills in Michigan aimed at reducing arrests and county jail populations.

Prior to his position at Pew, Schuster served in various correctional oversight roles where he worked with incarcerated people, system practitioners, and lawmakers to transform institutional culture and outcomes. Schuster has authored and contributed to several publications on the topics of jail reform, housing and safety of LGBT prisoners, and correctional facility improvement.

"I applaud Governor Murphy for his commitment to a comprehensive national search for the New Jersey Corrections Ombudsperson. While the Dignity Act provided landmark protections for incarcerated people, a core portion of the legislation was dedicated to ensuring the Ombudsperson has the resources, powers, and ability to be a truly unbiased advocate for incarcerated people and their families," **said Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez**. "I am confident that the new Corrections Ombudsperson, Terry Schuster, will fulfill the duties of the role and know that his experience and expertise in corrections reform will be a benefit to our state. I look forward to working with him and his leadership."

"The Ombudsperson is supposed to serve as a layer of protection for inmates against abuse and improprieties, at Edna Mahan Women's Correctional Facility and other state correctional facilities. Now, with the position being filled after a credible and deliberative process, our state can hopefully turn a new corner, fix a broken system, and provide support to inmates and correctional staff who have concerns to report confidentially," **said Assemblyman Raj Mukherji**.

"Terry Schuster's experience as an attorney and criminal justice policy expert will be influential as he takes on this role as the Ombudsperson for New Jersey Corrections," **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. "I am confident that Terry will live up to



expectations, giving the critical oversight needed to ensure our state's corrections system runs smoothly and effectively."

"I am delighted to hear that the Governor's office has appointed Terry Shuster as Ombudsperson. I look forward to working with him and the Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson to continue to improve conditions in our prisons," **said Assemblyman Bill Spearman.**

Schuster was selected after a national search, aided by recruiting firm EFL Associates. In a first for a corrections oversight position of this kind, Ron Pierce, a formerly incarcerated member of the Office of the Corrections Ombudsperson Advisory Board, participated in the interview and screening process to help inform the Governor's appointment.

"As a formerly incarcerated person, I am deeply grateful to have been a part of the process to select the next New Jersey Corrections Ombudsperson, an essential role given the deep challenges facing New Jersey's prison system," **said Ron Pierce, Policy Analyst in the Democracy & Justice Program at the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice and member of the Correction Ombudsperson's Advisory Board.** "Building our systems always works best when impacted communities are included – people who know what is at stake, who have experienced the issue, and who can be a vital part of the solution. It is encouraging that Governor Murphy recognized that when establishing the selection process. The Governor's final selection of Terry Schuster, I hope, will advance the tenets of the Dignity Act and I look forward to his leadership in this role."

Schuster received his B.A. in English from Duke University, and his J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law.

He will assume the role on May 23, 2022.

For a picture of Terry Schuster, please click here ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/vxn73g/fd1rrbm/zg9jkw_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!NciTZzmKju-idMnEDam5-mhNqs2FscNPij_NMDlcEriMTYSQlablkr4cEgSoRxd818eymfZmGU9_DMFoRo3bKaiklBc\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/vxn73g/fd1rrbm/zg9jkw_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!NciTZzmKju-idMnEDam5-mhNqs2FscNPij_NMDlcEriMTYSQlablkr4cEgSoRxd818eymfZmGU9_DMFoRo3bKaiklBc$)).

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