

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy and Acting Attorney General Platkin Announce Proposed Legislation Establishing Statewide Police Licensing Program

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CEDAR GROVE – Governor Phil Murphy and Acting Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin today announced proposed legislation that would create a statewide police licensing program. If enacted, the bill would require all law enforcement officers to hold valid, active licenses issued by the Police Training Commission (PTC) in order to be employed as officers in the State of New Jersey.

In June 2020, the PTC, which establishes statewide law enforcement standards, voted unanimously to create a statewide police licensing program, recognizing that over 40 states across the country use a form of decertification or licensing for law enforcement officers. In an effort to help build public trust in law enforcement, this proposed police licensing program would require all law enforcement officers to meet certain uniform professional standards to become, or continue to be, an active law enforcement officer in the state. To better protect the health, safety, and welfare of all citizens, the legislation would grant the PTC the ability to take actions against the licenses of officers who act outside the professional standards or engage in illegal or improper conduct. Professional licensing is used in various other contexts, and occupations such as teachers, doctors, electricians, and counselors, among others, are subject to licensing requirements that provide the public with appropriate assurance of professionalism, qualification, and accountability.

"I am honored to announce that we will be joining the overwhelming number of states who have established a police licensing program as a requirement for all law enforcement officers," **said Governor Murphy**. "These licenses should be held with honor as they show that these officers have been through rigorous training and have upheld what it means to be a law enforcement officer to the highest professional standards."

"The statewide licensure of our law enforcement officers is a crucial next step in strengthening community-police relationships," **said Acting Attorney General Platkin**. "This proposed legislation consolidates best practices from around the country to create a true national model—a licensing program that will ensure the continued excellence of our dedicated law enforcement professionals."

Under the proposed bill, the PTC would establish the licensure process and qualification standards for officers and applicants, including: passing a psychological examination; maintaining post academy ongoing professional training requirements set by the PTC, and not engaging in conduct including social media posts or being an active member of a group that advocates for the violent overthrow of the government or for discrimination based on classes protected by the Law Against Discrimination (LAD).

The bill would make law enforcement licenses subject to renewal three years after issuance. Furthermore, the PTC would be authorized to suspend, revoke, place conditions upon, or deny licenses, after a hearing. Governor-appointed public members would be expanded from two to four members of the PTC.

Under the bill, employing law enforcement agencies must also inform the PTC of any separation from employment of a licensed officer, and hiring agencies must request from the PTC the reasons why an applicant was separated from any prior law enforcement employment. For instance, an employing unit must contact the PTC when an officer loses their license due to conviction of a crime, conviction of Domestic Violence, or conviction of offense for losing a firearm. Combined, these provisions would establish a mechanism for law enforcement agencies to make thorough and effective hiring decisions.

"Our law enforcement does an incredibly important job protecting the safety of our communities," **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. "Continuing to promote a culture of transparency, accountability, and professionalism is important to maintaining community trust in policing and licensure is a path to strengthening that. Just as a doctor has a license to practice, it makes logical and practical sense that we should advocate for an officer to have a license to police too."

"We have taken major steps over recent years – requiring the use of body-worn cameras, enhancing training, and increasing the diversity of our law enforcement agencies – to fortify the relationships between our communities and the law enforcement agencies that protect them. Police licensure is a commonsense next step," **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. "Our communities will be better served – and our law enforcement agencies will be better equipped – with a framework for licensure in place."

"The creation and implementation of a statewide licensure program for law enforcement officers is essential," **said Senator Troy Singleton**. "For several years, I have sponsored legislation that would create a licensing program that sets requirements and minimum standards for police at all levels of government. I truly believe that uniform professional standards will help build public trust and ensure that proper policing is occurring across New Jersey."

"It is time for New Jersey to take the initiative and follow other states by implementing a licensing program for police officers to ensure transparency and accountability," **said Assemblyman William Spearman**. "I am currently working on legislation to address these concerns and promote coordination across the state."

"The Police Licensing Legislation is a long time coming," **said Reva Foster, President, NJ Black Issues Convention**. "I know that the New Jersey residents will be proud to finally join forty-six states in these United States to require law enforcement officers to be licensed."

"The New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association stands behind Governor Murphy and Acting Attorney General Platkin's proposed legislation for a police licensing program in our state," **said Patrick Colligan, President, New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association**. "This licensing program will provide transparency to the communities we serve and will hold our officers accountable in order to maintain a high professional standard and provide the due process they deserve. When our badges are tarnished by bad actors in our profession, it makes us all look bad."

"We fully support licensing of law enforcement agents in the State of New Jersey and it's long overdue," said **Richard T. Smith, President, NAACP New Jersey State Conference.**

"The New Jersey Fraternal Order of Police which represents over 14,000 of New Jersey's Finest supports Governor Murphy's initiatives to further enhance professionalism within the Law Enforcement community in the State of New Jersey," said **Robert Gries, Executive Vice President, NJFOP .** "We look forward to supporting and working with the Governor's Office on this and all matters that affect and improve the ability of Law Enforcement to perform their important work."

"If a barber needs a license to style hair, then a law enforcement officer should be licensed to protect and serve," said **Marcus Sibley, Director of Conservation Partnerships, Northeast Region (NJ, NY, CT), National Wildlife Federation.** "Licensure isn't a solution, but it's a step in the right direction, towards a destination of accountability and deterred unacceptable behaviors."

"New Jersey's Black residents are three times more likely to have force used against us than our white counterparts and excessive force claims cost New Jersey taxpayers millions each year. This proposed legislation is not only timely but a critical step in the right direction," said **Reverend Charles Boyer, Pastor, Greater Mount Zion Bethel AME Church and Executive Director, Salvation & Social Justice, United Black Agenda.** "We applaud Governor Murphy and Attorney General Platkin on their leadership and look forward to working with the legislature to ensure what passes heightens the standard around police conduct in the state and effectively hold officers who fail to meet that standard accountable."

"The State Troopers Fraternal Association, which represents over 1,800 rank and file New Jersey state troopers, is proud to stand with Governor Murphy and our law enforcement colleagues with respect to the implementation of police licensing here in New Jersey," said **Wayne Blanchard, President, State Troopers Fraternal Association of New Jersey.** "We believe this comprehensive licensing initiative will provide our membership with the prestige of holding a state licensed position like so many other professions, while incapacitating bad actors. The licensing program will also ensure the highest standards of training are attained and that certification are met in a uniform manner for police officer in our state."

"The National Coalition of Latino Officers whole-heartedly supports licensing for New Jersey police officers. Standardizing our profession helps foster trust with the communities we serve and raises the bar for expectations," said **Richard Rivera, National Coalition of Latino Officers.** "Licensing offers transparency so the public understands how we should conduct ourselves and ensures women and minorities in policing are not unfairly disciplined. We look forward to continuing the conversation on licensing with legislators and support Governor Murphy's efforts in introducing this first step towards police licensing in an open and fair process."

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