



## NEW JERSEY SENATE

PAUL A. SARLO  
DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER  
36TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT  
496 COLUMBIA BOULEVARD, 1ST FLOOR  
WOOD-RIDGE, NJ 07075  
PHONE: (201) 804-8118  
FAX: (201) 804-8644

COMMITTEES  
CHAIRMAN  
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS  
JUDICIARY  
HIGHER EDUCATION  
LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

February 8, 2016

Mr. Anthony Cureton, President  
Bergen County NAACP  
PO Box 1136  
Teaneck, NJ 07666-

Dear Anthony *Anthony*

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me regarding legislation I am sponsoring to increase transparency in access to police audio and video recordings while protecting the privacy of citizens on the recordings. As we discussed, my two main goals in drafting this legislation are to protect the privacy of citizens who are recorded on these tapes and to make it easier for people who are recorded by police to obtain their own recordings without having to secure a court order.

I agree 100% with people who want police recordings to be available in order to weed out bad police officers who abuse the public and violate the law. It is a disgrace to read about police departments in other parts of the country that are fighting against releasing recordings that show police officers abusing their authority and even shooting unarmed citizens. That is why I drafted my legislation to give people who are on police recordings the legal right under the open public records act (OPRA) to obtain a copy of their recording within seven days of making a request. These recordings will still be available to judges, prosecutors and internal affairs officers as is currently provided for under the law. Giving people, or their next of kin, who are recorded on police 9-1-1 calls and body cameras the legal right to obtain a copy of their own recording will increase transparency while also protecting their privacy. Once a person has a copy of their recording, they are then free to do whatever they want with it including giving it to the press or posting it on social media.

As I told you, I was heartbroken to read a front page article in The Record last November which contained the transcript of a 6 minute, 38 second 9-1-1 recording describing the blow-by-blow account of a woman's vicious murder by her former boyfriend, who was a former police officer terminated by the New York City Police Department. Including that highly descriptive and disturbing transcript in the article served no public purpose because the woman was already dead

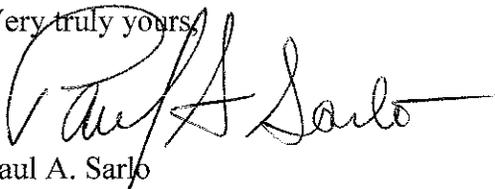
and buried and her assailant was already in police custody. Including the transcript in the article bordered on tabloid journalism and subjected this poor woman's family, including her two children, to having to relive the horror that was this woman's final minutes alive.

Seeing how easy it was for virtually anyone to obtain a 9-1-1 tape caused me to reflect and think about this issue, particularly in light of the fact that police departments are now being encouraged to have officers wear body cameras to record their interactions with citizens. It caused me to think back to when I had a severe medical emergency in my home approximately seven years ago that required my wife to call 9-1-1 and for a police officer to save my life by using an AED on me. The 9-1-1 recording would have recorded my wife, scared and emotional, graphically describing my condition and symptoms to the 9-1-1 operator. The recording from the police officer's body camera, if he had been wearing one, would have shown me lying half-dressed and unconscious on my bedroom floor, then being shocked to life with the AED and then being administered CPR by the officer. I thought about how emotionally scarred my wife and children would be if these recordings appeared in the news media or were posted on social media.

I also thought about other scenarios in which a person's privacy would be violated if police recordings were available to everyone and anyone. These recordings can capture people being undressed, injured, sick or distraught and/or revealing sensitive family circumstances or medical information. People should feel free to be open and honest when calling 9-1-1 or speaking to a police officer and should feel confident that their privacy is protected from nosy neighbors, prying employers and tabloid journalists.

I thank you for the invitation to meet with members of the Bergen County N.A.A.C.P. on Tuesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> to discuss this legislation. I look forward to discussing this issue, as well as any other issues that are important to your membership, so that I can learn about their concerns. I am confident that we can work together to have legislation that protects the public from police abuse while also safeguarding people's privacy.

Very truly yours,



Paul A. Sarlo