

**GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT UPON SIGNING
SENATE BILL NO. 3220
(FIRST REPRINT)**

Today I am signing Senate Bill No. 3220 (First Reprint), which allows an exemption from the Civil Service Commission ("CSC") Law Enforcement Examination requirement for entry-level law enforcement officers. The exemption only applies if a person demonstrates successful completion of a police training course approved by the New Jersey Police Training Commission. The bill allows a municipal or county police department to hire a person exempt from the requirement as long as there is a conflict of interest and nepotism policy in effect.

I commend the sponsors' goal of addressing diversity in police hiring. Among the various ways law enforcement officers are hired, the CSC has provided a Law Enforcement Examination in an effort to create a neutral, objective, and equitable means by which those who wish to serve this State through upholding our laws can establish candidacy to do so in civil service jurisdictions. Unfortunately, because of a multiplicity of factors, including the inability of some candidates to afford the privately run preparatory courses that give certain candidates an edge, these tests can sometimes yield eligibility lists that disproportionately reflect non-minority candidates at the top of the list.

This bill would allow, but not require, an appointing authority to hire a candidate based upon completion of a course that teaches and tests an array of qualities and skills necessary to become a successful law enforcement officer. This can serve as a particularly useful tool for localities seeking to expand the diversity of their police forces in instances where the test may have limited that option.

To that end, I am strongly urging municipalities and other hiring jurisdictions seeking to take advantage of the bill to financially sponsor promising candidates for course completion. Such a financial commitment would help avoid the skewed selection of only candidates who can afford to fund the basic course on their own, which too often excludes persons of color. I am also urging that appointing authorities refrain from using this option if it will perpetuate, rather than reduce, the disparity in the hiring of minority candidates.

Finally, I wish to note that the law provides the CSC broad authority to enforce the Civil Service Act and to issue regulations to effectuate its laudable purposes. My Administration is committed to creating a fairer New Jersey, and part of that commitment means ensuring equality among the ranks of our valued law enforcement officers. I would remind both appointing authorities and candidates seeking to utilize the option created by this bill that, once hired, these employees enjoy the full range of civil service protections, which will continue to be robustly enforced by my Administration.

For these reasons, and with these strong recommendations, I am signing Senate Bill No. 3220 (First Reprint) into law today.

Date: February 4, 2021

/s/ Philip D. Murphy

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Parimal Garg

Chief Counsel to the Governor