



NEW JERSEY SENATE

SENATE CHAMBERS

CNO99

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0099

May 7, 2019

New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir Grewal  
Attorney General's Office,  
Dept. of Law and Public Safety  
PO Box 080  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0080

Dear Attorney General Grewal:

As you may know, on May 5, The Star-Ledger reported that a New Jersey teacher, who allegedly had pornography on his school computer, and was fired from a number of schools due to allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior with children, had been recently hired for yet another teaching job in New Jersey.

This man, Shawn Cier, was the subject of a previous news investigation that inspired my Assembly colleague Jay Webber and I to draft what is commonly known as the "Pass the Trash" law which was signed into law in April of 2018 by Governor Phil Murphy.

The legislation, S-414, requires New Jersey school districts, charter schools, nonpublic schools, and contracted service providers to review employment history of prospective employees who will have regular contact with students, to ascertain allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct.

Our hope was that this law would stop the dangerous hiring practice known as "passing the trash," and ensure that chronically-abusive teachers would no longer be able to move from school to school unchecked.

In the case of Mr. Cier, we simply do not have enough information to determine 1) if his conduct rises to the level of criminal prosecution and 2) if all of the parties involved in his most recent hiring actually followed the letter of the law.

For this reason, I would like to formally request that you launch an investigation into this specific case, so that if Mr. Cier, Insight Workforce Solutions (the contracting firm that aided in his most recent hire), or any other party involved broke the law, the State can prosecute accordingly and ensure that this man is never permitted to put our children at risk again.

To that end, I would also like to humbly request that you review our legislation in light of this case, to ensure that there are no loopholes in the law that allow dangerous individuals to continue to come into contact with our children.

For the safety and security of our children, we need to do everything we can to ensure that the legislation we enact is effective, and that bad actors do not find ways to skirt around the laws we pass to keep our most vulnerable residents safe from harm.

Every child has the right to a safe and nurturing learning environment. A classroom should not be a safe haven for people who could put our children at risk. If we need to take additional legislative action to stop the trash from being passed once and for all, then that is what we will do. I hope you will join us in our fight to protect the innocent, by honoring our request for your investigative assistance and wise counsel.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my requests. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time with your questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Pennacchio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Senator Joe Pennacchio  
Legislative District 26