



For Immediate Release

March 7, 2022

On Saturday, February 12th, two Bridgewater Police Department officers intervened in an altercation at the Bridgewater Commons Mall between two teenagers: one was Black and the other appeared to be white. The officers threw the Black teenager to the ground, knelt on him and handcuffed him, while inviting the white-presenting teenager to sit nearby.

In the last five years, not one investigated complaint of excessive force or differential treatment by the Bridgewater Police Department has been sustained. Due to the high-profile nature of this incident of racial bias and excessive force caught on video, the Bridgewater Police Department is not investigating this complaint of excessive force and differential treatment. The investigation has been turned over to the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office. The Somerset County Affairs Summaries show that a very small percentage of investigations of differential treatment and excessive force conducted by the Somerset Prosecutor's Office are sustained. From 2017 to 2021, only 5 of 154 investigated complaints of differential treatment have been sustained (3.3%) and 6 of 72 excessive force complaints have been sustained (8.3%). Black individuals experiencing racist abuse, violence, and brutality at the hands of law enforcement can have no confidence in an internal affairs system that rarely sustains their complaints.

Black Community Watchline joins other local, state and national organizations in demanding accountability and transparency while acknowledging that the Internal Affairs process is secretive, rarely sustains civilian complaints, and is wholly inadequate.

Black Community Watchline calls on members of the state legislature to make law enforcement disciplinary records public via the Open Public Records Act (A996/S371), enact civilian complaint review boards with strong powers (A1515), and end qualified immunity.

Join ACLU-NJ and New Jersey Communities for Accountable Policing (NJ-CAP) and tell your legislators to rein in the police: <https://action.aclu.org/send-message/nj-2021-policing-intro>

If you experience or witness anti-Black violence or bias, call 1 (888) 300-8105 to speak to a Black Community Watchline dispatcher and receive confidential support, resources and rapid response (as available) from allies to your location.

Sincerely,

Black Community Watchline