



# MEMO OF SUPPORT

[A7512 \(Hyndman\)/ S6364 \(Gounardes\)](#)

*Allows JCOPE to Disclose Status of Investigations to Complainants and the Public*

**June 2021**

## **Title**

An act to amend the executive law, in relation to requiring the Joint Commission on Public Ethics to update complainants on the status of investigations.

## **Summary**

Section 1 amends section 94 of the executive law to enable JCOPE to disclose information during a pending investigation to keep the complainant or target of the alleged misconduct informed during the process, allow JCOPE to update the public about the status of an investigation under certain circumstances, and require JCOPE to provide the complainant or target of the alleged misconduct with written notice of developments in the investigation.

Section 2 provides the effective date as immediate.

## **Statement of Support**

Reinvent Albany supports this legislation because it will allow individuals who bring complaints forward to JCOPE, as well as the general public, to be more informed about the status of ongoing investigations. Currently, JCOPE is not able to notify complainants about whether investigations are moving forward, or provide the public status updates, including for cases that are high-profile and already public due to the nature of the allegations or target of the complaint. This leaves complainants—including victims of sexual harassment, public officials, or watchdog groups—in the dark about whether complaints made to JCOPE are proceeding or have failed to move forward due to the commission dismissing them.

JCOPE has [recommended since 2018](#) that it be allowed to disclose the status of investigations under certain circumstances. This bill mirrors JCOPE's proposal, and expands upon it to require complainants to be notified about the status of their complaints.

While much more must be done to provide the public confidence that misconduct will be handled independently and effectively, this legislation is a step in the right direction. It will improve transparency of JCOPE's activities by allowing public disclosure of the status of their investigations.