



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Section
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: January 28, 2020

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 128

POSITION: Letter of Concern

BILL TITLE: Law Enforcement – Department of State Police – Body-Worn Cameras

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:

This legislation seeks to require the Department of State Police (DSP) to purchase a body-worn camera for every sworn member by January 1, 2021. The cameras shall be used by all police employees to include plain clothes, undercover, and supervisory personnel while on duty.

DSP is currently in the second year of a five-year contract to purchase and install new In-Car Camera recording systems. DSP has installed over 280 cameras in patrol cars at 16 of 23 barracks state wide. So far, DSP has spent over \$2 million on our current system. The goal of the DSP is to equip every road patrol trooper, Corporal and below in the Field Operations Bureau, with a camera system consistent with our mission and budget.

DSP has had In-Car camera systems since the mid 1990's. When Body-Worn cameras entered the field of law enforcement, DSP evaluated their use as it relates to our mission. The majority of our work is performed in and around the police car. Essentially, 80% of our work is highway patrol related. Using that as our guide, DSP reviewed the value of each system consistent with our needs and budget. The Superintendent determined the In-Car camera system provided DSP the best value.

The Maryland General Assembly has often taken positions on legislation to allow Chiefs and Sheriffs to purchase their own equipment based on the needs of the particular agency. But, the legislature has required standardized training and policies to guide management. HB 128 will be the first time a single police agency has been mandated to purchase a specific piece of equipment without consultation with the agency Chief.

HB 128 requires the DSP to expend several million dollars, in addition to the millions already spent, to purchase a camera system that the Department has already determined does not meet our needs.