



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

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: February 27, 2024
BILL NUMBER: House Bill 707 **POSITION:** Letter of Information
BILL TITLE: Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Use of Body-worn cameras

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This legislation requires every sworn officer, regardless of rank, to wear a body worn camera (BWC) while the officer is in uniform, in public, and conducting law enforcement related duties. The bill repeals “the law enforcement officer who regularly interacts with the public” standard for the wearing of a camera.

Under current law, the Department of State Police (DSP) was required to purchase body-worn cameras for each law enforcement officer who regularly interacts with the public as part of the law enforcement officer’s duties. DSP interpreted the language to include all Sergeants and below in the Field Operations Bureau, our SWAT team, and investigators. This requirement did not extend to sworn personnel in certain special divisions, such as the Licensing Division.

House Bill 707 creates an operational and financial burden on the DSP. Every sworn member is required to be prepared to be in uniform for any number of public events. Our command staff, that does not regularly interact with the public, but may be “in public”, will now be required to wear a body-worn camera and keep it on anytime they are in public, meeting with local or state leaders, or attending conferences or meeting with civic groups. This is a major policy change from the original law.

As noted in our cost analysis provided to the Department of Legislative Services, there is a major financial impact to our general fund budget. The DSP also expects an increase in PIA requests for the commander’s body-worn camera images to see the content of any meetings or discussions, that may be considered confidential.

The DSP supports the current body-worn camera law and has a robust body-worn camera program. DSP has deployed over 1,000 cameras.