



RACIAL EQUITY IMPACT NOTE

DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE SERVICES
MARYLAND ▪ GENERAL ▪ ASSEMBLY

2026 Session
HB0349

Public Safety - Law Enforcement - Use of Body-Worn Cameras

Bill Summary

This bill alters and expands the application of existing provisions that require specified law enforcement agencies to require the use of a body-worn camera (BWC) by each law enforcement officer employed by the law enforcement agency who regularly interacts with members of the public as part of the law enforcement officer's official duties. Under the bill, these law enforcement agencies must require the use of a BWC by each sworn law enforcement officer, regardless of rank, employed by the law enforcement agency while the officer is in uniform, in public, and conducting law enforcement related duties.

Racial Equity Impact Statement

The bill would significantly expand the required use of BWCs for specified law enforcement officers in the State. With regard to the bill's effects on the volume of incidents, complaints, or disciplinary actions for excessive force, existing reporting on law enforcement activity in the State does not contain sufficient information to enable historical or prospective analysis of how BWC use may affect these incidents. BWC programs may also impact other aspects of law enforcement, including training, evidence collection, and officer accountability. These impacts cannot be estimated without more data; however, the bill will allow increased documentation of officer interactions to more effectively investigate complaints. This will provide a more informed assessment of alleged officer misconduct and enhance public safety. Equity impacts would require, at a minimum, data reporting that connects incidents with disciplinary and demographic data.

Analysis

The bill expands existing statutory provisions requiring officers with specified law enforcement agencies to wear BWCs to include each sworn law enforcement officer, regardless of rank,
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employed by the law enforcement agency while the officer is in uniform, in public, and conducting law enforcement-related duties. Existing law requires only officers who regularly interact with members of the public as part of their official duties to wear a BWC.

Impacts of the Bill

In general, much of the support for BWCs relies on the assumption that BWCs will improve interactions between the public and law enforcement officers, thereby increasing public trust and communication and improving public safety outcomes. An increasing number of law enforcement agencies have adopted BWC programs to improve evidence collection, strengthen officer performance and accountability, and enhance agency transparency. While research is mixed on whether BWCs actually reduce use-of-force incidents or complaints, agencies and researchers emphasize that, at a minimum, contemporaneous documentation can corroborate facts, expedite complaint investigations, and support training and supervision efforts.

The landscape of causal outcomes from BWC deployment is highly complex. Accordingly, the bill's significant expansion of BWC use for all uniformed officers in public suggests definite impacts for those individuals who have contact with law enforcement officers. There is no data available, however, from existing BWC programs in the State to infer any specific impacts, except that documentation of law enforcement encounters will increase as a result of the bill. Expanded documentation is likely to improve the availability of evidence in future use-of-force complaint investigations, which could benefit both complainants and law enforcement agencies. Additional impacts of BWCs have proven to be nuanced and unpredictable. For example, one study of the Phoenix, Arizona police department found that BWC activation significantly reduced the likelihood of arrest in Black neighborhoods, but did not moderate the likelihood of arrest in Hispanic neighborhoods.

The most salient potential impact is how the widespread use of BWCs in the State will affect officer misconduct, as evidenced by use-of-force events and officer-involved civilian deaths. Several existing annual reports track these types of incidents, as discussed below.

Use of Force Report

This report, compiled by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), details use-of-force incidents reported by law enforcement agencies in the State that resulted in monetary settlements or judgments. The 2024 report found that of the individuals involved in these incidents, 72% were male and 28% were female. Most of the individuals involved were Black (61%), while two-thirds of the officers involved were white.

Serious Police Officer-involved Incidents & Officer Discipline Report

The Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission collects information related to serious officer-involved incidents, which includes instances where criminal charges were filed against an officer, where contact with a person results in serious injury or death of a person, or a complaint of criminal misconduct or excessive force has been investigated and sustained against an officer. The report provides demographics for the law enforcement officers involved in serious incidents, but not for the civilians.

Deaths Involving a Law Enforcement Officer

GOCPP must report on the incidence of officer-involved deaths and deaths in the line of duty in the State. The dataset includes demographic data but does not provide separate demographic data for deaths occurring outside correctional facilities.

Independent Investigation Division (IID) Report on Police-involved Deaths

IID is a unit of the Office of the Attorney General and is the primary investigative unit for police-involved incidents that result in the death of individuals or injuries likely to result in death. In 2025, IID investigated 13 fatal shootings, 6 fatal vehicle collisions, and 2 in-custody fatalities. Of those decedents, 16 individuals were Black and 3 individuals were Hispanic.

Despite the existing mandated reporting on use-of-force incidents, serious injuries, and fatalities, some of which may be linked to officer misconduct, none of these datasets provide adequate data or a means to analyze the equity impacts, since none of them link incident-level reporting to the demographics of all parties involved (officers, complainants, and other civilians) and the status of officer disciplinary investigations.

Conclusion

BWC programs are primarily connected to policy goals that aim to reduce excess use-of-force incidents and officer misconduct. While there is limited data available that suggests that Black and potentially Hispanic individuals are overrepresented in use-of-force incidents in the State, the data is not dispositive. The limited research on the effects of BWC programs suggests substantial complexity in how these programs affect police and civilian interactions. The bill's expansion of BWCs for all uniformed officers performing their duties in public will, at a minimum, provide documentary evidence that can improve internal investigations. Any additional impacts, which could be numerous, cannot be measured without additional data. Specifically, to measure the bill's impacts on use-of-force and officer misconduct incidents generally, incident data that pairs officer and civilian demographics with investigation outcomes would be needed.

Information Sources: Maryland Department of State Police; Office of the Attorney General; Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission; Department of Legislative Services

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Appendix – Maryland Demographics

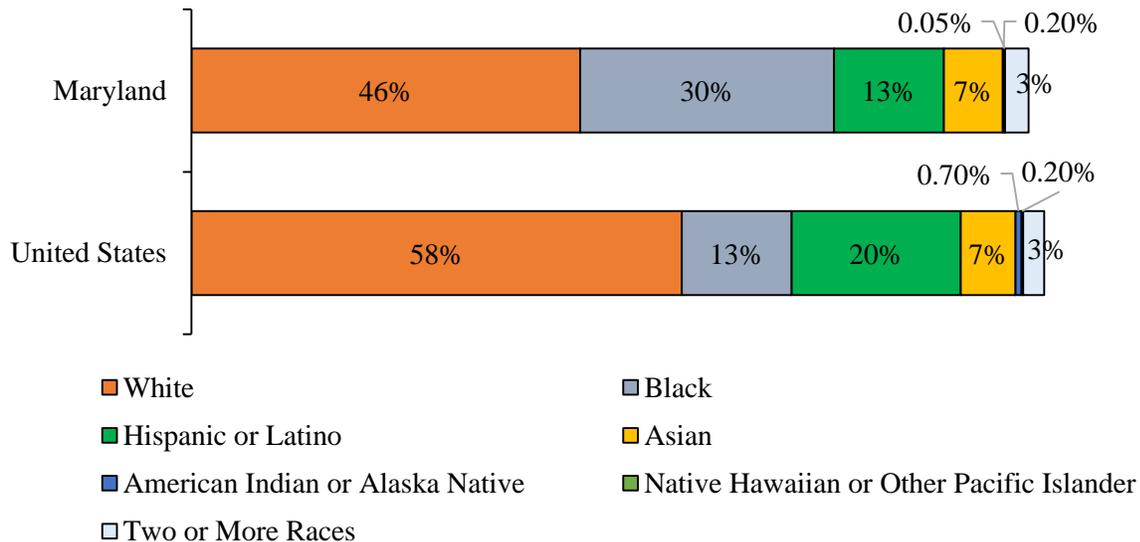
Race and Ethnicity of the Maryland Population

Maryland’s 2020 census population is 6,177,244, a 7% increase from the 2010 census count and approximately 2% higher than the 2019 census population estimates. Maryland remains one of the most racially and ethnically diverse states in the nation and is ranked as the fourth most diverse state by the U.S. Census Bureau’s [Diversity Index](#). While no single racial or ethnic group constitutes a majority, racial minorities as a group constitute a majority of the State’s population. This diversity underpins the analytical framework used in racial equity impact notes (REIN), which seek to identify potential disparities that may be exacerbated or created by proposed criminal justice legislation.

Methodology Update

Beginning in 2025, REIN will use annual population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Population Estimates Program (PEP) as the basis for disparity and disproportionality calculations. This methodological update reflects best practices in demographic analysis, as PEP data incorporate births, deaths, and migration to provide the most current population counts between censuses. Although the estimates are more temporally responsive, they do not materially change the proportionate racial and ethnic breakdown observed in the 2020 census. Instead, they conservatively reflect population changes since 2020 while preserving the overall demographic composition of the State.

**U.S. and Maryland Population by Race and Ethnicity
2024 Population Estimates**



Note: Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau