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*Legislative District 29B*  
St. Mary's County

Economic Matters Committee



**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
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**Testimony for HB128: Law Enforcement - Department of State Police - Body-Worn Cameras**  
**Judiciary Committee**

Good afternoon Chairman, Vice Chair, and distinguished members of the committee. I am Del. Brian Crosby and it's an honor to present House Bill 128 entitled **Law Enforcement – Department of State Police – Body-Worn Cameras**.

In 2015, this body created a commission to draft a set of best practices regarding the usage of body cameras by Maryland Police Departments. In the five years since then, we have seen widespread adoption of this technology from large jurisdictions like Montgomery County and Baltimore City to smaller localities on our Eastern Shore such as Fruitland and Berlin. In my home county of St. Mary's, body cameras have been utilized since 2016 in Lexington Park.

In each of these jurisdictions, the outcome of this adoption has been a resounding success because body cameras serve a variety of critical purposes. For one, they protect law enforcement officers from false claims of misconduct, and increase accountability and transparency. In a complaint or dispute between an officer and a citizen, body cameras can provide a full, independent, and verifiable account of what happened in a given situation to authorities. Sheriff Mike Evans of Calvert County has described them as a "blessing" that have "exonerated deputies on more complaints than not" for this exact reason. On the flip side, body cameras can provide excellent evidence when it comes to investigating police misconduct. Just in 2018, a Baltimore City officer was found guilty of fabricating evidence thanks to body camera footage and suspended for three years. Our ability to catch and prosecute misconduct is critical to maintaining and improving community relationships.

Some may argue that body cameras are duplicative, or unnecessary, given that the state police already have dash cams and that most of their activity is in the form of vehicular stops, but dash cams are an incomplete measure. What happens if an officer alleges that the occupant of a vehicle was reaching for a weapon? What happens if the occupant alleges that evidence was planted? How can we verify claims when they're out of a dash cam's sight? The simple answer

is that we can't. That's why St. Mary's County Capt. Edward Willenborg described body cameras as the logical "next step in the evolution" of policing.

Last year, this body approved a bill that allowed Johns Hopkins University to create its own private police force. This bill was controversial, as many of you will recall, but it mandated that members of this security force wear body cameras for the same reasons that I have outlined for you today: officer safety, accountability, and transparency. It's simply hypocritical of us to hold private institutions to a higher set of standards than we hold ourselves to. As such, I ask for a favorable report on HB128.