

State of Maryland

Commission on Civil Rights

“Our vision is to have a State that is free from any trace of unlawful discrimination.”



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February 25, 2021

Senate Bill 690 – Public Information Act - Inspection of Records From Body-Worn Digital Recording Devices POSITION: Support

Dear Chairperson Smith, Vice Chairperson Waldstreicher, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights (“MCCR”; “The Commission”) is the State agency responsible for the enforcement of laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and state contracts based upon race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, physical and mental disability, and source of income.

Senate Bill 690 requires body camera footage to be released under the Maryland Public Information Act. The bill contains certain exceptions to footage that can be released, such as video that could identify a victim of domestic violence. The Maryland Police Training & Standards Commission, in consultation with the Maryland Association of Counties, the Maryland Municipal League, law enforcement agencies, the news media, victims’ rights advocates, and other stakeholders, must develop uniform standards and procedures for law enforcement units to follow when responding to MPIA requests.

The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights supports SB690 because the bill strikes a balance between the privacy rights of law enforcement officers and victims with the public safety interests of stakeholders, such as victim’s rights organizations and the media. A framework to release footage to entities with a bona fide interest in accessing it is necessary if we seek to improve police/community relations while ensuring that officers who are accused of wrongdoing are being held accountable. It is hoped this, in turn, will have a potentially significant impact on achieving meaningful police reform while protecting the civil rights of all in Maryland being served by our law enforcement professionals.

For these reasons and more, the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights urges a favorable vote on SB690. Thank you for your time and consideration of the information contained in this letter. The Maryland Commission on Civil Rights looks forward to the continued opportunity to work with you to improve and promote civil rights in Maryland.