



TESTIMONY FOR SB0071

POLICE OFFICERS - TESTIMONY – PRESUMPTION OF INADMISSABILITY

Bill Sponsor: Senator Sydnor

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0071 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of individuals and grassroots groups with members in every district in the state with well over 30,000 members.

Our Coalition members understand and appreciate that police officers have a difficult and dangerous job. As we have seen time and again, sometimes the judgement calls that an officer makes can be fraught and they have little time in which to make decisions. Having a body-worn camera on will help either protect and officer who made good decisions in a difficult situation, or show that they either made a mistake or did something reprehensible.

In court, an officer's word is what can cause someone to be fined or put in jail. We know that many officers are trustworthy and their word represents fact. But we have found that not every officer is truthful, and when we can't trust their word, we know that we can trust what we see on camera.

We have seen that when officers turn off their cameras, and they have an altercation with the citizens they are sworn to protect, often other members of the public record those altercations and what they record can differ from the officer's accounts.

The public needs to have confidence that they can look at a situation in which someone was harmed and see what led to the decision that was made. If an officer has turned off their camera, or refused to turn it on in the first place, the bottom line is that we can't and shouldn't trust their word.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.