



## POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Bill: HB0152 Law Enforcement – Department of State Police – Body–Worn Cameras

Position: Favorable

Date: February 9<sup>th</sup> 2021

Dear Chairman Clippenger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Office of The Public Defender is in support of HB0152 because it is a commonsense legislation necessary to rebuild community trust in law enforcement while also providing accountability for police misconduct. The past year was met with civil unrest due to the unwarranted and untimely deaths of African Americans at the hands of police. The growing civilian mistrust of officers is worsened when these instances of deadly force happen. The use of body cameras will provide more transparency for Maryland Department of State Police in their everyday encounters with the civilians.

According to the National Institute of Justice there are several positive research findings that highlight the benefits of the Police’s use of body worn cameras.<sup>1</sup> For example, they discuss researchers at Arizona State University who found that officers with body worn cameras were

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<sup>1</sup> Chapman, Brett. “Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us.” National Institute of Justice, 14 Nov. 2018, [nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us](http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us).

more productive in making arrests, had fewer complaints filed against them compared to officers without body cameras, and officers with body cameras had fewer use of force instances.<sup>2</sup> According to the National Institute of Justice, recent randomized controlled trials relating to body cameras have occurred and are extremely effective as random assignment is able to isolate a specific treatment of interest from all other factors that influence any given outcome.<sup>3</sup> In one of these trials the Journal of Experimental Criminology found that use of force incidents increased for those officers who were given the discretion to determine when they had to activate their body cameras during encounters with citizens.<sup>4</sup> In contrast there was a reduction in use of force instances for officers who activate their body cameras right when they arrived on scene.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, another controlled trial was completed by the National Institute of Justice on 400 members of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. Researchers found that officers with body worn cameras generated fewer use of force reports and complaints than officers without body cameras.<sup>6</sup>

It is evident from the National Institute of justice's findings that those officers who are required to have activated body cameras see less complaints and tend to do more honest police work. Most importantly, there is a reduction in instances of officers using excessive force which would mean that officers that are required to use body cameras tend to use de-escalation tactics

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<sup>2</sup> Charles M. Katz, et al. "Evaluating the Impacts of Officer Worn Body Cameras In The Phoenix Police Department" Arizona State University, April 2015, <https://cvpcs.asu.edu/content/evaluating-impact-officer-worn-body-cameras-phoenix-police-department-0>

<sup>3</sup> Chapman, Brett. "Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us." National Institute of Justice, 14 Nov. 2018, [nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us](http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us).

<sup>4</sup> Chapman, Brett. "Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us." National Institute of Justice, 14 Nov. 2018, [nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us](http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us).

<sup>5</sup> Chapman, Brett. "Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us." National Institute of Justice, 14 Nov. 2018, [nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us](http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us).

<sup>6</sup> Chapman, Brett. "Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us." National Institute of Justice, 14 Nov. 2018, [nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us](http://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/body-worn-cameras-what-evidence-tells-us).

rather than violence. In addition, this bill is essential for police misconduct accountability and transparency. It is for these reasons; we urge a favorable report on this bill.