



City of
Salisbury
Jacob R. Day, Mayor

1 March 2022

Committees: Judiciary & Appropriations

Testimony on: HB 1207 – Public Safety – Body Worn Cameras – Costs and Expenses

Position: Favorable

Dear Members of the Judiciary and Appropriations Committees,

As you consider the merits of **HB 1207**, I ask that you **support** this vital legislation and vote to give **HB 1207** a **Favorable** Committee report.

The City of Salisbury supports HB 1207, which will provide critical funding for body-worn cameras. This bill is crucial as it enables law enforcement agencies across our state to act in the best interests of Maryland residents by promoting the use of and covering initial costs associated with body-worn cameras.

As local law enforcement agencies across Maryland seek to foster relationships with the communities they serve, measures to increase transparency and public accountability have proven to be instrumental in these efforts. While police departments across the state recognize the value of body-worn cameras, which play an important role in engendering the trust of the public while helping to document interactions and helping to keep both officers and community members safe, this vital equipment is often out of reach to smaller agencies who simply cannot afford body-worn cameras.

Body-worn cameras are an essential component of modern-day policing. They provide for increased transparency and accountability, which helps keep both officers on the frontlines and members of the public safe. This is precisely why, even without a mandate, we equipped the men and women of our Salisbury Police Department with body-worn cameras in 2015. Learning from what we have accomplished in Salisbury, I understand the extreme cost burden of these essential devices. We are fortunate that our City was in a position to fund this expense, yet I understand the plight of other jurisdictions that may be hard-pressed to find room in their budgets to fund all costs associated with body-worn cameras.

While I believe that all jurisdictions should utilize body-worn cameras, I understand the financial strain encountered by many police departments and municipalities as they budget for this equipment which has become vital to policing. No police department, regardless of size, should have to choose between paying an officer's salary and procuring body-worn cameras. Our municipalities and police departments should welcome a body-worn camera mandate, although it need not be an unfunded mandate that would essentially cripple the already fragile budgets of law enforcement agencies across Maryland.

I ask for your **support** of this critical public safety legislation.

Respectfully,

Jacob R. Day
Mayor