

Testimony of Delegate Jazz Lewis
Public Safety - Law Enforcement - Body-Worn Cameras (HB162)
Before the House Judiciary Committee
On March 1, 2022 1:00pm

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon and members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am proud to introduce HB162, and I urge members of the committee to support this legislation. This bill stems from our work on the Law Enforcement Body-Worn Camera Taskforce, which was charged by Speaker Jones, with finding ways to defray the cost and operationalize the state-wide promotion of body cameras. This bill also holds Body-Worn Camera programs to the highest standards of transparency, ensuring that they are used properly across all of Maryland. HB162 will require and authorize the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission (MPTSC) to develop disciplinary practices for the misuse of Body-Worn Cameras (BWC) for all law enforcement agencies. Further, it will allow MPTSC to establish standards for body-worn cameras to be utilized by law enforcement agencies across the state, rather than only being simply advisory as it currently is.

All law enforcement agencies will be required to develop BWC programs consistent with the standards established by MPTSC. Though, some agencies would be allowed to continue their own BWC programs, provided that they are consistent with MPTSC standards. Furthermore, the MPTSC will provide training to agencies on the proper use of BWC and the implementation of BWC's programs so that agencies have the guidance they need to get these programs done correctly.

The bill will also allow for the state-wide negotiation of contracts, purchases, and storage for BWC's, removing the burden of costs away from local agencies. The costs of these programs have proven to be a significant barrier for smaller agencies. With this approach, we offer a standardized state-wide system that reflects the needs of law enforcement, promises transparency, and removes the most significant hurdles to implementing BWC programs across our state.

Implementing the best standards and disciplinary practices for body-worn cameras is essential for public safety.

Body-worn cameras, when utilized, can be an effective police accountability tool to improve police oversight, transparency, and police-civilian relations in the United States. Current research shows the benefits of police body cameras include reduced use of force, better transparency, quicker resolution, and corroborating evidence.¹ Though they are not a catch-all solution to the issues we face when it comes to accountability and transparency, they are a useful tool to continue the police reform agenda we have done in recent years.

¹ Chapman, Brett. "Body-Worn Cameras: What the Evidence Tells Us." *NIJ Journal* (2019)

The increasing demand we have seen for body-worn cameras among law enforcement agencies must be coupled with set standards and practices for effective implementation, as well as the ability to scale the BWC's to reflect the need of this technology. We need to create a uniform way for agencies across the state to set up the programs that they need to have. And hold these programs to the highest standards That is what we do with the HB162,

Let's weigh the costs and benefits of BWCs.

In 2021 a cost analysis on the implementation of police body-worn camera programs in Maryland was conducted in pursuance of the Senate Bill 71, the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021, which requires all county law enforcement agencies as well as the State Police to implement body-worn cameras by 2025. The study estimates that the annual contract cost of a body-worn camera program in Maryland falls between \$1791 and \$3788 per officer/ camera, which is equivalent to state-wide total costs ranging from \$25,176,524 to \$50,016,752². The estimated average annual contract cost to implement a body-worn camera program in Maryland would be \$32,415,820, including support personnel costs.

The usual counterargument for expanding BWCs is that the cost doesn't outweigh the benefits. However, a recent study from the University of Chicago Crime Lab and the Council on Criminal Justice found that "Investing in police body cameras has a benefit-to-cost ratio of 5 to 1, which is the equivalent to turning a \$1 bill into a \$5 bill."³ In addition, multiple studies on BWCs found that the technology can significantly reduce the use of force by about 10% and complaints against police by 17%⁴ and suggest that body cams can positively affect numerous policing outcomes essential for public safety.

HB162 will ensure that we properly utilize BWCs across our state and support local agencies with a flexible solution to attain the best programs possible. With this legislation, we defray costs and assist the implementation of body-worn cameras for law enforcement agencies. With the BWC programs outlined in this bill and created by MPTSC, we can help law enforcement do its job in protecting the public and build transparency and trust with the communities they serve.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote on HB162

² Crowe, Matthew and Eugene Lauer. "Cost Analysis of Police Body-Worn Cameras in Maryland." *Energetics Technology Center*. (2021)

³ Williams, Morgan; et al. "Body-Worn Cameras in Policing: Benefits and Cost." *Becker Friedman Institute*. Council on Criminal Justice. University of Chicago Crime Lab (2021)

⁴ Justice and Public Safety. "Research Says Body Cams Are Good Public Safety Investment." (2021)