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**HB 429 Public Safety – Law Enforcement Agencies – Body-Worn Cameras (Kwamena’s Law)  
Hearing before the House Judiciary Committee, March 1, 2022  
Position: Favorable**

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a not-for-profit civil rights and anti-poverty legal services organization that seeks to advance social justice, economic and racial equity, and fundamental human rights in Maryland. A core aspect of its mission includes government transparency and accountability, which are critical to confidence of the governed in the government. As has been seen in recent years locally and around the country, this principle must apply to the police and their relationship with the public and communities.

Kwamena’s Law will provide consistency and equity to Maryland’s new statewide law requiring police officers to wear body-worn cameras. The statewide law will actually be statewide, covering law enforcement agencies in all jurisdictions, not just the counties while leaving out all the cities and towns with their own police departments. It will also cover all officers whenever they are engaging in law enforcement activities involving the public, whether in uniform or not, whether “on duty” or not.

There is no rational basis to do less than HB 429 requires. Evidence shows that significant percentage of police killings and uses of excessive force have involved plain-clothes officers. Many uniformed officers in Maryland are authorized to drive a police car, carry their service weapon, and/or wear a uniform and badge while off duty, and are authorized to use their police powers even when not on the clock. When they do so, they must also wear a camera. And the majority of Marylanders live in its cities and towns, large and small.

Truly, last year’s body-worn camera legislation is not a statewide law until Kwamena’s Law passes. There is no reason to delay.

For the foregoing reasons, the PJC supports HB 429. Should you have any questions, please contact Debra Gardner, Legal Director, at 410-625-9409, ext. 228 or [gardnerd@publicjustice.org](mailto:gardnerd@publicjustice.org).

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