



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 25, 2025

Committee: House Judiciary

Bill: HB 669 - Law Enforcement Officers - Body-Worn Cameras - Requirements

Position: Support with Amendments

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League (“MML”) supports the intent of House Bill 669, which provides some new parameters and procedures for body worn camera (“BWC”) usage.

If properly implemented, BWCs can help provide transparency and accountability for officer actions and protect both citizens and the officer. Best practices and policies established locally and in state law require officers and custodians to follow proper procedures and requirements for data storage and retention as well as for review, redaction, and release of the footage.

However, BWCs still pose significant implementation issues. While many municipalities have launched BWC programs, the costs associated - which can reach into the tens of millions of dollars for multiyear comprehensive contracts – are significant and can be prohibitive to other jurisdictions. The proper storage and staff resources for necessary redactions of the audio and video footage from the cameras can be particularly cost burdensome, even without the new redaction and storage requirements in this bill.

Our members are primarily concerned with the following two proposals:

- A custodian shall only allow inspection of BWC footage if with written permission from everyone on the footage, or by the recording officer, or the individual captured on the recording, or their attorneys. BWC footage often records everyday unrelated activities. Obtaining written permission from everyone on the footage, including strangers who may be in the background for less than a second, would be very challenging.
- BWCs recordings must be retained by law enforcement agencies or the camera vendor for at least 90 days after the recording, unless it was redaction or flagged for a legal proceeding, which both extend the time for retention. Storing this amount of data without state financial support is cost prohibitive for local governments.

For these reasons, the League respectfully requests that the Committee adopt amendments addressing these concerns before giving House Bill 669 a favorable report. For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at angelicab@mdmunicipal.org or (443) 756-0071. Thank you for your consideration.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.