



State of Maryland
Department of State Police
Government Affairs Unit
Annapolis Office (410) 260-6100

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: February 24, 2026
BILL NUMBER: House Bill 349 **POSITION:** Letter of Information
BILL TITLE: Public Safety - Law Enforcement – Use of Body-Worn Cameras

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This legislation seeks to expand the use of body-worn cameras worn by law enforcement officers, regardless of rank, when in uniform, in public, and performing law enforcement duties. This expansion includes the Superintendent, their command staff, and any officer who could be in uniform at any time in public.

Under current Maryland law, law enforcement officers must wear body-worn cameras (BWCs) when interacting with the public or participating in a law enforcement activity and when displaying their badge or other official insignia. With the passage of police accountability legislation in 2021, the legislature mandated a statewide policy for the use of BWCs, which requires all police agencies to use BWCs by July 1, 2025, and that the camera shall record and save at least 60 seconds of footage immediately prior to the officer activating the record button. Use of the BWC is controlled by the model policy developed by the Police Training and Standards Commission, which must be adopted by every law enforcement agency.

This main change caused by House Bill 349 raises significant concerns for both sworn officers and agencies. First and foremost, the bill requires the Department to purchase additional cameras, storage space, and licensing agreements. The Chief and their command staff routinely handle information that, if recorded, could risk unintended exposure of confidential personnel issues and ongoing investigations not appropriate for public disclosure. They attend public hearings and private meetings with legislative and executive staff, where discussions are often privileged or classified. Criminal investigators who are in uniform would be required to wear BWCs at crime scenes involving traumatic or sensitive circumstances. These changes substantially depart from the original law's intent and would have major fiscal and operational impacts on the Maryland State Police (MSP).

As written, the bill's mandate would include BWCs for all sworn officers in the MSP and the Office of the State Fire Marshal. This requirement will increase demands on MSP's IT and Public Information Act operations. MSP currently has 1,300 cameras but will need 261 more for sworn staff and 75 for the Office of the State Fire Marshal, for a total of 1,636 devices. Certain ranks do not wear BWCs, depending on their job and public contact. The superintendent

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(Colonel), Bureau Chiefs (Lt. Colonel), and some Majors do not wear BWCs. All Field Operations Bureau barracks troopers up to Lieutenant are required to have BWCs, while Majors and Captains generally do not. However, divisions like the Special Operations Division may issue cameras up to Major depending on public involvement. The Criminal Investigation Unit and other specialized units' use of BWCs would also vary depending on their responsibilities. Currently, no members of the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) are mandated to wear a BWC. However, if this bill were passed, it would change.

The estimated first-year cost to purchase additional BWCs is approximately \$740,000, which includes docks, software, licensing, and storage. Ongoing annual maintenance and video storage costs are projected to increase by approximately \$500,000 beginning in the second year and increasing every year thereafter. Operationally, the increased number of cameras will significantly increase the workload of the IT unit responsible for training, equipment servicing, and replacing damaged cameras and associated hardware. To support this workload, MSP anticipates the need for an additional CNS II position, along with associated equipment and a state vehicle.

The Public Information Act unit spends thousands of hours annually reviewing BWCs video and documents for over 4,000 public requests. Reviewing each hour of footage takes four hours, as every frame requires individual attention. MSP anticipates an increase in requests, especially for command staff footage, thus requiring one more Management Associate to maintain timely responses.

The law, as written as a part of Police Accountability, is working. Requiring the Training and Standards Commission to create the model policy is working. During this difficult budget year, this mandate is very expensive and cannot be absorbed in our budget.

The Maryland Department of State Police respectfully submits this information for your consideration as you evaluate House Bill 349.