



## TESTIMONY

**COMMITTEE:** House Judiciary

**DATE:** February 24, 2026

**POSITION:** Favorable with Amendments

**BILL:** House Bill 904

The Maryland Municipal League supports the goal of this legislation: ensuring that law enforcement officers are equipped with protective body armor while performing their duties. Municipal governments share the General Assembly's commitment to officer safety. Providing appropriate protective equipment is not controversial; it is fundamental.

Many municipal departments already issue body armor and maintain replacement schedules. For smaller agencies that may not currently provide armor to all officers, this bill could represent a positive step toward enhancing officer safety statewide.

However, several implementation and enforcement provisions raise practical concerns that warrant refinement:

- Body armor is custom-fitted equipment. Replacement often requires re-measuring officers due to weight or body changes; vendor ordering and manufacturing lead time; budget cycle considerations; and shipping delays outside a department's control. The bill's 31-day reporting trigger following expiration does not account for these real-world constraints. An agency may be actively replacing equipment yet still fall outside the 31-day window due to vendor delays or fitting timelines.
- The automatic withholding of grant funds is a significant fiscal consequence. For many small municipal departments, these grants support recruitment and retention efforts, equipment and technology upgrades, and training and community policing initiatives. Withholding all grant funds for what may amount to an administrative or procurement delay is disproportionate and could unintentionally undermine public safety efforts rather than strengthen them.

To strengthen this bill and alleviate the League's concerns, we respectfully request amendments to:

- Provide reasonable flexibility for documented procurement delays.
- Clarify that good-faith replacement efforts do not trigger punitive funding consequences.
- Tailor grant withholding mechanisms so they are proportionate and directly related to the violation.
- Ensure small departments have adequate implementation time and support.

Municipalities strongly support officer safety and accountability. With modest refinements to address procurement realities and proportional enforcement, this bill can advance those shared goals without imposing unintended fiscal or operational harm.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

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*MML represents 88 municipal police departments and roughly 4,000 officers.*