



POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Bill: SB 583 Law Enforcement – Body–Worn Cameras – Capabilities

Position: Favorable

Date: February 17, 2021

Dear **Judicial Proceedings Committee**:

The Maryland Office of the Public Defender supports SB 727, because it is common sense legislation necessary to rebuild community trust in law enforcement. In the midst of social unrest of this past year following these untimely deaths, the consensus for police accountability and transparency only continues to grow.

In practice, most police agencies require their body camera system to save 30 seconds, without audio, before an officer turns on their body camera. Our office has discovered exculpable and mitigating evidence in the 30 seconds of pre recording from body cameras. But these cameras have capabilities to record up to 2 minutes before officers activate their body camera. And had the ability to record audio during those two minutes as well. Changing those capabilities would increase the transparency & accountability provided by body cameras.

Additionally, there have been multiple use of force incidents where the camera doesn't capture the entire police interaction. For example, when police officers killed 21-year-old Duncan Lemp during the execution of a no-knock warrant in March of last year, their body cameras weren't turned on until after Lemp's death. If their body cameras instead recorded 2 minutes prior to being activated, we could have had more information around the circumstances of Lemp's killing. The

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tragic killing of Duncan Lemp is only one example of how this bill would provide more accountability in policing.

For these reasons the Office of the Public Defender supports a favorable report on this bill.