



**Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee
February 9, 2021**

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HB 187 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Body–Worn Cameras

FAVORABLE

The ACLU of Maryland supports HB 187 which requires that all of Maryland law enforcement be outfitted with body-worn cameras by January 1, 2022.

The tremendous public interest in and pressure for BWCs reflects the significant concern among large segments of the community about how police exercise their significant power to deprive us of our liberty, and even of our life. BWCs allow us, for the first time, to have a record of what occurred in the significant number of police-citizen interactions that otherwise go unwitnessed, a record that is not subject to accusations of bias, misperception, faulty memory, or deliberate falsehood.

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In addition to serving to confirm or rebut allegations of misconduct, BWCs can serve as crucial evidence in prosecution, can allow departments to more effectively monitor their officers' behavior and conduct, can be an invaluable training tool, and evidence shows that they have a calming effect on both officer and citizen behavior, which makes both officers and the public safer. They are thus being adopted or considered in jurisdictions throughout the state and the country.

We recognize that there may be some budgetary and implementation challenges associated with the tight timeline of the bill. We would support amendments to extend this timeline should reasonable rationale be provided underscoring the necessity.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 187.