



## Maryland Municipal League

*The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns*

# TESTIMONY

February 9, 2021

**Committee:** House Judiciary

**Bill:** HB 187 - Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Body–Worn Cameras

**Position:** Oppose

**Reason for Position:**

The Maryland Municipal League opposes House Bill 187 mandates that law enforcement agencies adopt body worn camera policies and issue body worn cameras for all officers to use by October 2021.

If properly implemented, police body-worn cameras can help provide transparency and accountability regarding the actions of both the officer and the citizens. Best practices and policies established locally and in state law require officers and custodians to follow proper procedures for operation of the camera as well as data storage, review, redaction, and release of the footage. However, a statewide mandate for all agencies to use body cameras poses significant implementation issues and comes with tremendous cost.

While several counties and municipalities have launched body-worn camera programs, the costs associated with the programs—which can reach into the millions of dollars for multiyear comprehensive contracts—can be prohibitive to other jurisdictions. The bulk of the costs lie not with the acquisition of the cameras but in the storage and staff resources for necessary review of the audio and video footage.

The timeline established in the bill requiring all police agencies to have their officers outfitted with body cameras in less than 10 months is much too quick for this type of important process. Other bills introduced this session have longer lead times which, if enacted, would allow agencies to go through a properly vetted procurement.

Due to the bills mandate on local agencies and the short implementation period, the Maryland Municipal League opposes HB 187 and respectfully requests an unfavorable committee report.

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