



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

POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: February 9, 2021

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 187

POSITION: Letter of Concern

BILL TITLE: Public Safety - Law Enforcement – Body-Worn Cameras

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS:

This legislation seeks to require every law enforcement agency to purchase a body-worn camera for every sworn member by October 1, 2021. The cameras shall be used by all police employees to include plain clothes, undercover, and supervisory personnel while on duty.

The Maryland State Police does support the use of body cameras and in car camera systems to provide transparency and added integrity to law enforcement operations. However, the mandates in House Bill 187 are not consistent with the recommendations of the Workgroup to Address Police Reform and Accountability, and the Body Camera Task Force. This legislation requires the expenditure of over \$2 million before the effective date of the bill. The effective date of the bill and the compliance date are the same. This mandate does not consider any local or state budget process and it does not provide a funding mechanism. The Workgroup recommended all police agencies purchase body cameras and gave local and state law enforcement until 2025 to arrange for financing of this mandate.

MSP is currently in the third year of a five-year contract to purchase and install new In-Car Camera recording systems. MSP has installed over 400 cameras in patrol cars at our 23 barracks state wide. The Department has already purchased an additional 137 in car cameras for installation in 2021. MSP has spent over \$2 million on our current system. The goal of the MSP is to equip every road patrol trooper, Corporal and below in the Field Operations Bureau, with a camera system consistent with our mission and budget.

MSP has had In-Car camera systems since the mid 1990's. When Body-Worn cameras entered the field of law enforcement, MSP evaluated their use as it relates to our mission. The majority of our work is performed in and around the police car. Using that as our guide, MSP reviewed the value of each system consistent with our needs and budget. While MSP has determined that the in car camera system provided MSP the better operational value, the Superintendent has agreed with the Workgroup that a body Camera could supplement our operations if properly funded and staffed. There are no funds in the FY 21 or FY 22 proposed budget for body cameras.