



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony Regarding SB 558:
Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Body-Worn Cameras
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 23, 2022**

Good afternoon Chair Smith, members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Maryland General Assembly has acknowledged the importance of moving forward in establishing a more formalized process to mandate the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement agencies throughout the state. In the past two sessions, several bills have been presented to mandate the use of body-worn cameras to promote accountability and transparency in police-civilian interactions¹. In July 2020, the Law Enforcement Body Camera Task Force was formed by the General Assembly (HB739, Acts of 2020). The Task Force was charged with studying economical methods for the storage of video and audio recording resulting from the body-worn cameras and to report out recommendations while taking into account budgets of State, county, local, and campus law enforcement agencies. Senator Ready and I served on this Commission on behalf of the Senate.

Senate Bill 558 codifies the Task Force's recommendations identifying which Maryland state departments and/or commissions will have the responsibility and authority/funding to put in place statewide required equipment and software procurement, storage procedures, training requirements and audit capabilities. In summary:

- 1) The Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission has already been tasked with the development and adoption by regulation, a model uniform disciplinary matrix for use by each law enforcement agency in the state (as per).² SB 558 establishes that this Commission will also provide appropriate training in the use of equipment, cameras and associated software and technology needed by law enforcement agencies to effectively utilize these assets.
- 2) The Maryland Department of General Services in coordination with the Department of Information Technology and the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission will negotiate contracts to acquire body-worn cameras, equipment and technology needed for this statewide program. Additionally, a statewide uniform storage and access system for the resulting data will be identified to allow for the storage, viewing, editing, redacting, and transfer of data in the most cost effective manner possible.

¹ See Chapters 59 and 60 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2021.

² Article – Public Safety, Section 3-105 Annotated Code of Maryland

- 3) The Maryland Department of General Services will be responsible for all costs and expenses associated with the use of body-worn cameras by all law enforcement agencies.
- 4) The Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission will develop and publish online the policy for disclosure of body-worn camera recordings and data to the public to promote transparency, accountability and to maintain individual privacy.
- 5) The Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission will conduct audits to evaluate the implementation of body-worn camera policies and the use of associated equipment and technology – the scope and objectives will be determined by the Commission.
- 6) This act shall apply prospectively and may not affect any contract related to body-worn cameras negotiated before the effective date of this Act.

Senate Bill 558 is an important next step in implementing a much needed program that will provide our law enforcement agencies with appropriate state-funded technological tools, while also improving public safety.

For the aforementioned reasons, I ask that SB 558 be reported out favorably.