



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 23, 2022

Committee: Senate Judicial Proceedings

Bill: SB 558 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement - Body-Worn Cameras

Position: Support with amendments

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League supports Senate Bill 558 with amendments, which mandates that municipal police agencies equip their officers with body worn cameras and provides cost subsidies for their acquisition and ongoing use.

Broader use of police body cameras promotes transparency in public safety and about 40 out of the 88 municipal police agencies have already implemented them on their officers to some degree. While this bill does impose a mandate on municipal agencies, it also provides cost subsidies. Specifically, the bill requires the State to negotiate contracts to acquire body cameras, establish and administer a statewide storage system for all body camera footage, and cover all initial and ongoing costs associated with body worn camera programs. The cost assistance is of great impact to municipal police agencies that would be required to use these devices, but there are a few important changes to the bill MML suggests through amendments, which have been shared with the Sponsor.

- Allow for police agencies to participate in the State acquisition and storage programs at the discretion of the police agency
- Add language to mandate certain State agencies to collaborate with police agencies to determine the technical specifications and capabilities needed for equipment and storage
- Clarify that police agencies participating in the State storage program will remain the records custodian
- Substitute language from SB 31 as the framework for disclosing footage under the Public Information Act

The provisions in SB 558, with the proposed amendments, provide funding assistance for those agencies that want it and flexibility for those that do not, while fulfilling Statewide us of body worn cameras. For these reasons the League respectfully requests that this committee provide Senate Bill 558 with a favorable report with these critical amendments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Scott A. Hancock	Executive Director
Angelica Bailey	Director, Government Relations
Bill Jorch	Director, Research and Policy Analysis
Justin Fiore	Manager, Government Relations