

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL HB0429 - FAVORABLE
Public Safety - Law Enforcement Agencies - Body-Worn Cameras

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and
members of the Judiciary Committee

FROM: Chris Apple
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In 2021, this committee courageously passed SB 71 requiring the use of body cameras for many Maryland police forces. Body cameras are a crucial tool in fighting police misconduct. Body camera footage can provide evidence verifying whether claims of misconduct are true.

This bill will close two loopholes in Maryland's body camera laws. SB 71 unfortunately excluded municipal police forces and plainclothes officers. Plainclothes officers are sometimes known to engage in more misconduct than their uniformed counterparts. In 2020, the Baltimore Sun reported that BPD's plainclothes officers were long known to have more misconduct complaints against them than other officers.¹ A 2018 study of NYPD plainclothes officers showed they were involved in almost 7 times as many killings as uniformed officers.²

Municipal police also sometimes receive misconduct complaints. They carry firearms and interact with the public in the same capacity as other police officers. It makes sense that they should be included in the body camera requirement.

Body cameras keep Marylanders safe and expose police misconduct when there would otherwise be minimal evidence. I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report for HB 429.

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<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-police-plainclothes-ordered-into-uniform-20200918-7wj5nyxqefcv3cciompieneeq-story.html>

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<https://www.criminallegalnews.org/news/2018/sep/19/plainclothes-officers-6-percent-nyc-police-force-involved-31-percent-fatal-police-shootings/>