



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

TESTIMONY

March 1, 2022

Committee: House Judiciary

Bill: HB 591 - Public Safety – Law Enforcement Agencies – Body-Worn Cameras

Position: Oppose

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League opposes House Bill 591, which mandates that municipal police agencies equip their officers with body worn cameras yet provides no financial assistance to local agencies to operate these expensive programs.

Broader use of police body cameras promotes transparency in public safety and their increased use in the State carries many benefits. In fact, about 40 out of the 88 municipal police agencies see the benefits of body worn cameras and already have implemented them to some degree within their agency. This is not the root of MML's opposition.

The bill, however, lays down a significant unfunded mandate on municipal police agencies. There is enormous fiscal impact of acquisition of the cameras and equipment, ongoing maintenance of the devices, storage of the footage, and review and redaction for Public Information Act requests. This financial burden to municipal police agencies, particularly the smaller ones, would be immense without some degree of State subsidy.

Another bill introduced this year, HB 162, imposes the same mandate but also provides some for State financial support to police agencies to implement widespread body camera usage. It is this bill, with amendments discussed with the sponsor, that MML sees as the path toward Statewide body camera usage.

While MML certainly view the widespread usage of police body cameras as an effective way to improve transparency in law enforcement, the unfunded mandate on municipal agencies is problematic, and there is another bill that provides a vehicle to address these concerns. For these reasons the League respectfully requests that this committee provide House Bill 591 with an unfavorable report.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Scott A. Hancock

Angelica Bailey

Bill Jorch

Justin Fiore

Executive Director

Director, Government Relations

Director, Research and Policy Analysis

Manager, Government Relations