

March 1, 2022

TESTIMONY ON HB429 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Public Safety – Law Enforcement Agencies – Body–Worn Cameras

TO: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon, and members of the Judiciary Committee
FROM: Melody S. Cooper

Good day. I am Ms Melody S. Cooper, the mother of now-deceased Kwamena Ocran. My son was murdered just over a year ago by plainclothes Gaithersburg City Police Officers who were not wearing bodyworn cameras.

I wish to tell you a little bit about my son who was born a PRINCE. AND DIED A KING.

He started preparing four-course meals at the age of 12.

At 14, he learned auto mechanics. He was an avid athlete and honor-roll student. He won several trophies for football in Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. My son also played baseball. Kwamena received a silver and bronze medal for swimming and was recognized on CNN. He taught his niece how to swim when he was 15 and she was only 4. Before Kwamena turned 22, he became a Maryland-certified licensed roofing contractor.

An outstanding rap artist who started rapping at the age of 2. Kwamena wrote his own lyrics. He composed, arranged, performed, and recorded his own music. Kwamena was a loving son, a wonderful brother, terrific uncle, nephew and cousin, a loyal friend.

They have stolen my baby from me in which a part of my soul has been ripped out. Because the officers who killed my son were not wearing cameras, it was only their voices and their lies that was heard by the grand jury that decided not to charge them with my son's murder. If they had been wearing body cameras, there would be no question as to what happened to my child.

Bill 429 should not only be important to me, but everyone involved, because the community needs to be protected from these officers. Plainclothes officers are

more cocky than uniformed officers, like they can break the law because they're not in uniform.

I am here advocating against police brutality and to ensure that Bill 429 becomes law so that no one else will have to go through what I have.

As a result of my son's death, I will never be whole again. It has cost me my livelihood.

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Thank you for hearing me.