



Senate Bill 558

Public Safety - Law Enforcement - Body-Worn Cameras

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Date: February 23, 2022

From: D'Paul Nibber

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS SB 558 WITH AMENDMENTS**. This bill would, among other provisions, require the State of Maryland to procure body-worn cameras, equipment, and technology for all law enforcement agencies, and establish and administer a statewide uniform storage and access system for all body-worn camera data captured.

During the 2021 Maryland General Assembly session, MACo opposed the body-worn camera mandate included as a piece of the Maryland Police Accountability Act. Law enforcement officials at every level of government raised concerns for two principal reasons: unanticipated and potentially significant costs; and the administrative burden of reviewing and redacting thousands of hours of sensitive footage. SB 558, as a follow-up to last year's broad police reform legislation, is a significant and important step toward addressing these concerns, as well as ensuring smoother implementation of the Police Accountability Act.

To account for the capital and resources already expended to stand up these programs, MACo requests SB 558 be amended in the following ways:

- Local agency opt-outs for both the acquisition of body-worn camera equipment and/or the State's storage system;
- Grants covering the costs of agencies that opt-out of the State's procurement of equipment and storage system; and
- Mandatory collaboration between the State and counties regarding the redaction of footage maintained at the state level, with final approval of footage release vesting in the local agency.

Some counties have begun implementing their body-worn camera programs and consideration for their forward-thinking efforts could also add to the equity under the bill.

These amendments would preserve autonomy for law enforcement agencies whose needs may be different from what the State envisions, and potentially prevent leaving behind early-adopter counties. For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report for SB 558.