

# HB 5019 – Body Cameras

## Opposing Testimony

Thank you, Mr./Madame Chair, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am here on behalf of the Officers and Citizens Coalition, and I stand in opposition to HB 5019 and ask that you do the same.

Mr./Madame Chair, the OCC's aim has always been that of creating greater trust between officers and citizens of this state. We want to see a world in which citizens are not mistreated and no officer is falsely accused. At first, my organization was in favor of having body cameras for our officers. We assumed that this would reduce instances of excessive force, create greater transparency for citizens, and provide accurate evidence for the courts to consider. However, we were wrong in our assumptions, and I am here to tell you why.

Perhaps the greatest argument for body cameras is that it reduces instances of police violence against civilians. The logic seems sound; if an officer knows he/she is being watched, he/she will be more conscientious of his/her actions. However, this has not been the case. Evidence from Canada, Los Angeles, and other cities where body cams have been used for some time have all shown mixed, negligible, or no impact on police violence. Evidence has shown officers are no less likely to use excessive force than those who do not have body cameras. In essence, there is no added safety to having an officer wear a camera.

Another argument is that it allows greater transparency to the public. Again, this intuitively makes sense. If an officer's actions are recorded and released to the public, people are more likely to know what officers are doing. However, this too has not yielded the desired results. Footage is not released to the public unless it is directly required by a judge. This means that the evidence of actions taken by officers is largely restricted, stored, and analyzed by the police department. This means that it is not a truly public record.

Finally, there is the argument that this allows for more accurate evidence. However, footage is not usually released until an officer has had a chance to provide justification for what is seen in the footage. Again, this sounds ideal, but footage that is seen can only tell part of the story, and an officer who has provided a convincing explanation can turn an abusive situation to his/her favor. Additionally, the stipulation that an officer may turn off a camera for private reasons (going to the bathroom, private conversations, etc.) allows too much opportunity for an officer to claim something came up while his/her camera was off, or it may legitimately be the case that an issue arose while the camera was off. Either way, that time spent with the camera off leaves far too much ambiguity as to what actually happened and can either cast too positive or too negative a light on the officer.

Now, if cameras came at no cost to the public, I would likely still support the use of body cameras. It wouldn't necessarily bring more harm to having them in place, and they may just be neutral in their effect. But here's the

problem, they come at no benefit to officers or taxpayers. These are expensive cameras that do not do the job they are intended to. This, Mr./Madame chair is waste at its finest. When we could be allocating those funds to more affective means of officer and civilian protection like additional training, better equipment, etc., we are instead pouring out money into useless devices that do not yield their supposed result.

Again, my agency is all for more accountability, safety for the public, and trust in our police force, but it must be done right and in a way that has a desired effect. I therefore urge this body to vote no on this legislation.

Thank you for your time.

## **Articles**

Michael Durkheimer (October 23, 2017). Forbes, Why Don't Police Body Camera's Work Like We Expected?

Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeldurkheimer/2017/10/23/why-dont-police-body-cameras-work-like-we-expected/>.