

# **HB 5019 Body Cameras**

## **Supporting Testimony**

Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am here on behalf of the Coalition of Officers for Peace in firm support of HB 5019.

In July of 2014, two police officers approached a young woman's car suspecting her of having been a part of a massive criminal undertaking. The young woman did not realize they were police officers and attempted to escape thinking they were carjackers. When she attempted to escape, officers shot at her several times and hit her twice. According to the woman, she "inched" her car forward and the police shot at it with an unreasonable degree of force for the situation. By contrast, the police said that she "lunged at them" putting their lives in danger and therefore their opening fire was an act of self-defense. This is a great discrepancy of facts. A car inching forward vs lunging forward makes a great deal of difference in determining whether an officer's actions are reasonable. However, there was no footage to determine which account was correct.

This missing evidence could have resolved an issue that has since turned into a series of court hearings that extended seven years after the original incident while taking up time and resources for the woman, the police department, and the court system.

Mr. Chair, if there is one piece of evidence that every attorney, judge, and the public at large will ask for is video footage of an incident and for good reason. Testimony is dependent on individuals who witness an event, and even a well-meaning person may exaggerate certain details or miss them entirely due to the adrenaline of the situation. Video surveillance provides corroborative evidence beyond mere testimony, it allows investigators to gather missing details that were overlooked in the moment, and it allows for consistent and unchanging information.

This bill will have a positive impact, not only on the investigative process but also in preventing police abuse of power and restoring public trust for law enforcement. The chances of a police officer abusing his/her authority is the same as it would be for any other profession. There are some officers who will abuse their power, but there are far more who will use it responsibly. Those officers need to know that their actions will not be misconstrued and that accurate evidence is available. Additionally, if police know they are being monitored, they will be more

careful to make sure they are acting within the scope of authority and will be even less likely to abuse their power. Finally, the public will know that officers are held to a greater level of accountability and can rest easier knowing that evidence is available and accessible to them and the courts. Especially in a time when the police force is trusted so little, it is this state's obligation to restore that trust.

Mr. Chair, this bill is highly necessary for officers, citizens, and the courts. Especially when it comes to accurate evidence and suspected abuse of power, we need as much transparency as possible. This is a necessary tool. It is beneficial, it is wanted, and it is expedient to a safer society. I urge this committee to vote yes on HB 5019. I will happily take any questions at this time.