



House Bill 739

Law Enforcement Body Camera Task Force

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Judiciary Committee

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From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 739 as it seeks to coordinate and develop solutions to the costly issue of police body cameras.

While several counties and municipalities have launched body camera programs, the costs associated with the programs—which can reach into the tens of millions of dollars for multi-year comprehensive contracts—can be prohibitive to other jurisdictions. One area in particular that can be cost burdensome is the storage of the audio and video footage from the cameras.

Best practices and policies established by state law require law enforcement to follow proper procedures and requirements for data storage and retention as well as for review and release of the footage as required by the Maryland Public Information Act. Proper storage and staff time to comply with these requirements are costly factors that should be considered carefully.

For years, Maryland has struggled and failed to enact a set of clear guidelines for releasing body camera footage under the state's Public Information Act. Counties would hope that reaching a consensus on this pending, but important, matter can help promote their more widespread use, and remedy fears of overwhelming cost burdens.

HB 739 establishes the Law Enforcement Body Camera Task Force that is charged with studying options for the economical storage of audio and video recordings made by body-worn cameras (BWCs) and recommending budget conscious storage solutions. The Task Force provides a pathway forward for addressing the aforementioned costs associated with operating a body camera program.

For these reasons, MACo urges a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 739.