



General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Joint State Government Commission
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Short summary in response to House Resolution 113 of 2023
Body-Worn Camera Footage Outcomes for Law Enforcement Officers and Civilians
A Report of the Advisory Committee

House Resolution no. 113 (Sess. of 2023) directed “the Joint State Government Commission to . . . study how body-worn camera footage can be more effectively used to provide positive and safe outcomes for both law enforcement officers and civilians.” The Commission was also to “study how and by whom body-worn camera footage is currently used and stored in this Commonwealth,” along with “the cost of filming, storing and looking at every piece of body-worn camera footage recorded in this Commonwealth.” The study was to “include recommendations to ensure that body-worn camera footage is used for the justice of all and shielded from cyber threats.” An advisory committee was established to assist the Commission “as part of its study.”

Given the abbreviated timeline to “report its findings and recommendations,” the advisory committee was expanded as the study was ongoing and was able to convene four times. The initial conference covered the resolution’s requirements for the study; act no. 22 of 2017; pre-existent research on body-camera outcomes for police and civilians; the Commonwealth’s phased approach to body-worn camera implementation; policy recommendations adopted by Pennsylvania’s Commission on Crime and Delinquency; and, information from vendors. The second advisory committee conference covered a forthcoming survey of police departments; a discussion and review of departmental policies on body-worn cameras; and, equipment and data handling requirements and standards set forth by Pennsylvania State Police. The third advisory committee conference covered recommended or required policies and procedures for body-worn cameras and results from the survey of police departments. The final advisory committee conference was used to consider the report as drafted to date and to finalize its findings and recommendations.

- ❖ The ability of law enforcement to fight crime effectively continues to depend on the public’s perception of the legitimacy of the actions of officers. A number of recent civil disturbances across the United States subsequent to instances of lethal use of force by officers highlight the ongoing challenges in maintaining the public’s perceptions of law enforcement legitimacy, particularly as it concerns the use of force.
- ❖ Body-worn cameras have been viewed as one way to address these challenges and improve law enforcement practice more generally. . . .
- ❖ But what does the research tell us? Current studies suggest that body-worn cameras may offer benefits for law enforcement, but additional research is needed to more fully understand the value of the technology in the field.

The potential benefits of body-worn cameras are most prominently: transparency, civility, quicker resolution of complaints and lawsuits, corroborating evidence, and training.

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