

Government Administration and Elections Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-1229

AN ACT CONCERNING FEES FOR COPYING, REVIEWING AND REDACTING
RECORDS CREATED BY POLICE BODY-WORN RECORDING EQUIPMENT

Title: AND DASHBOARD CAMERAS.

Vote Date: 2/28/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/7/2025

File No.:

***Disclaimer:** The following JOINT FAVORABLE Report is prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and does not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose.*

SPONSORS OF BILL:

Government Administration and Elections Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

There has been a growing trend for members of the public to request body-worn and dashboard cameras from law enforcement organizations. Under current law this request is free of charge to the public and relies upon the law enforcement agency to use resources to prepare the video and audio recording suitable for public consumption. This has placed an ever-increasing financial strain on law enforcement agencies to use up resources to process these requests. This bill would seek to strike a balance of recuperating some of the financial resources used in this process while also maintain affordability to the general public and not keep information locked behind a financial barrier.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services:

As a health care agency with a division of safety services and a police force, under current law, in lines 115 thru 128, police officers, including those on DMHAS, are prohibited from using body-worn recording equipment to record in certain circumstances. In lines 129 thru 154 the bill reiterates that recordings of the outlined situations are not subjected to the Freedom of Information Act and are confidential. In lines 139 thru 142 there is an exception that allows certain individuals to have existing recordings disclosed. For patients seeking care the confidentiality and protections afforded by law make a difference in whether treatment is accessed. The intent of the new language is unclear, and we welcome additional conversations concerning the bill.

Colleen Murphy, Executive Director, FOI Commission:

The Commission recognizes that law enforcement agencies have experienced an increase in requests for police body-worn records and dashboard camera. This compliance has consumed the agency's resources. Fee structures should be reasonable and not impose an unnecessary financial barrier to obtaining access to public records. We have worked with proponents of a similar proposal to establish a fair and balanced fee structure to not create a barrier to public access and discourage requests for information. The Commission has included some language suggestions to clarify to whom the costs would apply and who would have access to the footage.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Karen Florin, Board of Directors, Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information:

The Commission supports the bill with clarifying language. We suggest amending the language in lines 239-241 to clarify to whom such cost should apply. As written these lines conflict and could be read to allow the agency to charge a person for costs incurred in the first four hours. We do not believe this is the intent of the proposal.

Connecticut Police Chiefs Association:

The Association needs assistance providing an avenue that enables police departments to provide videos that are not exempt from disclosure and also providing agencies with a fee structure. Currently no fee structure exists for videos. The bill helps change the current practice and strikes a balance between providing the public information from law enforcement and establishing a fee to help public agencies offset the increasing cost associated with this technology.

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, Connecticut Council of Small Towns:

Municipalities and other public agencies are facing costs associated with redacting information from video and audio recordings from body-worn and dashboard cameras. This may include storing, retrieving, redacting information, blurring, or blacking out certain content or removing sound and there should be a reasonable fee for this information. This bill will help offset compliance costs.

The following also testified in support of the bill:

Sarah Baillargeon
Joshua Caskey
Lorayna Hinton

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

David Medeiros, Advocate:

The First Amendment protects public access to government records as free speech and the right to petition the government. The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees due process and protection to restrictions on public records. Access to government documents cannot be denied without compelling justification.

The following also submitted testimony in opposition to the bill:

Anonymous, Ember, Systems Architect

Reported by: Pamela Bianca

Date: March 5, 2025