



HARTFORD POLICE UNION

20-28 Sargeant Street Hartford, CT 06105

Tel. 860-548-1435 Fax 860-548-1329 E-mail: hartford.union@att.net

February 17, 2015

Testimony for SB 770: An Act Creating A Pilot Program For Police Body Cameras.

Chairman Larson, Chairman Dargan, and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee;

As President of the Hartford Police Union, representing over 400 plus Police Officers ranging from Officer, Detective, and all the way up to the rank of Captain; all of whom so proudly server our Capitol City, cautiously support SB 770. We are urging a pilot program to test and evaluate this technology, and to study a number of complicated issues that come with its use, as outlined in this testimony.

The Police, The Public & Body Cameras

After certain events unfolded last year, there has been an outcry from the media, certain community groups, and public figures to mandate that police wear body cameras. Especially for a use of force incident, the general public sees a video as the end all be all; that is just not the case. They lack the understating of what happens in these types of encounters to the human body and often don't consider other evidence, such as eyewitness testimony, witness statements (heard but not seen), the officer's perspective, and of course the law itself.

There are several limitations to body cameras, never mind the cost to such a program. I wish to address ten (10) areas of limitations of body cameras.

- 1.) **A camera doesn't follow your eyes or see what you see:** the current equipment out there is not an "eye tracker" which follows the officer's eye movements. It only documents a broad scene which can't tell viewers where the officer is looking. A shift of attention by the individual from where the camera's focus is can miss or not see activity that occurs just outside of the camera's lens. Likewise, the camera does not react like the human body does during a critical incident, such as "tunnel/narrowing vision" or "Looming". In short, with the human physiological and psychological effects that occur during a critical indecent there can be a huge disconnect between what the camera captures and your field of view and visual perception.
- 2.) **Cameras can't record all signs of danger:** The most important one is a "Tactile cue" which is something a camera can't feel or record; only the subject can experience this. "Resistive tension" is a prime example. The camera might catch the struggle but it cannot demonstrate to the viewer how much resistance the suspect is giving or the bulge in their waist band, or the hard object in their pocket. The other thing is it can't know the experience or history an individual brings to an encounter.



HARTFORD POLICE UNION

20-28 Sargeant Street Hartford, CT 06105

Tel. 860-548-1435 Fax 860-548-1329 E-mail: hartford.union@att.net

- 3.) **Camera speed differs from the speed of life:** The speed of the recording frames is critical to capturing every millisecond of activity, so context is not lost between frames. For example, the recording systems in typical corner store capture video at less than 30 frames per second, which results in choppy footage and creates gaps in capturing actions and reactions of the subjects. Also, because of the reactionary curve an individual can be approximately a half-second or more behind the action as it unfolds on the video. Dr. Bill Lewinski of the Force Science Institute has shown in a study that due to the reactionary gap and the decisions to start and stop an action takes time mentally – it doesn't unfold as quickly as it depict on video.
- 4.) **A camera may see better than you do in low light:** A camera may record with more clarity in many low-light situations, making it seem brighter than reality, allowing the viewer to see more clearly than the officer involved. In low light situations, police officers have to rely on contextual cues and movement patterns based on their training and experience. Additionally, transitioning from dimly-lit to brightly areas, or vice versa, a camera my briefly blank out images while adjusting its sensor.
- 5.) **Your body may block the view:** How much of a scene a body camera captures is dependent on where it's placed and its angle. If it's attached to an eye glass or a hat brim, it is likely to be knocked off during a struggle. If it's on an officer's chest, it may only capture that person's arms extended arms, blocking the camera's field of view, and it will not follow the wearer's head movements. Also, when an officer stands sideways to the action so as to create a smaller target which is very common, the camera will record nothing of relevance.
- 6.) **Cameras only record in 2D :** The human body sees in 3D. This limitation affects the viewer's depth of field and won't be able to accurately judge distances. Without a proper sense of distance, a viewer may misinterpret the level of threat the individuals is facing.
- 7.) **Time stamping of videos:** To fully analyze and explain an officer's perceptions, reaction time, judgment and decision-making, it may be critical to break the actions down to the one-hundredths of a second or even less. It takes less than a quarter of a second to fire a shot, and it takes approximately one third of a second to recognize and react to a threat. It takes even longer to stop the action – approximately a half of a second, even if there is no longer a threat.
- 8.) **One camera might not be enough:** more cameras give us more angles, lighting, elements and different perspectives. Consider when a coach challenges a play in football, for example. Even with more camera angles, video alone cannot make up a complete investigation.



HARTFORD POLICE UNION

20-28 Sargeant Street Hartford, CT 06105

Tel. 860-548-1435 Fax 860-548-1329 E-mail: hartford.union@att.net

- 9.) **Cameras encourage second-guessing:** In a safe environment, being able to stop and freeze video to scrutinize a section or detail can lead to a great disparity between how much time an officer had to assess what he/she was experiencing in real-time in a high-stress situation, and what viewers can see, far removed from the recorded events.

We can't forget Graham v Connor and what the US Supreme court said, "An Officers decision in tense uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations are not to be judged with the 20/20 vision of hindsight."

- 10.) **A Camera cannot replace a thorough investigation:** As stated before, a video should never be regarded solely as the truth; it needs to be weighed and tested against witness testimony, forensics, statements of those involved, and other elements of a fair, thorough, and impartial investigation.

People need to be aware that a body camera mandate cuts both ways – they not only monitor Law Enforcement Officers, but the public as well, which will lead to a long list of individuals asking the Freedom of Information Commission for their videos. 99% of police officers do their job with dignity, professionalism and respect. We deal with the public at its worst and at its best; from tragedies to triumphs, and interact with both society's nicest and cruelest. With the implementation of body cameras, their behavior will be put on display.

We have to remember that there are short-term and long-term costs to consider. Existing collective bargaining agreements between police unions and municipalities could also become complicated with the introduction of body cameras. Again, we do cautiously support SB 770 at this time though, to study and evaluate the pros and cons of body cameras, and to account for their difficulties outlined here.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sergeant Richard Holton
Hartford Police Union
President