
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5381

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF POLICE BODY-WORN RECORDING EQUIPMENT.

SUMMARY

This bill specifically requires the state's guidelines on the use of police body cameras, starting October 1, 2024, to include provisions on the circumstances when officers must not pause recording with the cameras. The bill similarly requires these circumstances to be included in police basic and review training programs on body camera use.

By law, the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection commissioner and the Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) must jointly maintain body and dashboard camera guidelines, and law enforcement units and police officers must follow them (see BACKGROUND). Police basic and review training programs conducted or administered by the State Police, POST, or municipal police departments must include training on, among other things, using body cameras.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage, except the provision on police training programs takes effect October 1, 2024.

BACKGROUND

Law Enforcement Units and Police Officers

By law, a "law enforcement unit" is any state or municipal agency or department (or tribal agency or department created and governed under a memorandum of agreement) whose primary functions include enforcing criminal or traffic laws; preserving public order; protecting life and property; or preventing, detecting, or investigating crime (CGS § 7-294a(8)).

Under the body camera law, a "police officer" is a sworn member of

a law enforcement unit or any member of a law enforcement unit who performs police duties (CGS § 29-6d(a)).

Model Policy

Under the state’s existing model policy on the use of body cameras and dashboard cameras (last revised in March 2024), police officers generally must (1) activate body cameras while interacting with the public in a law enforcement capacity and (2) keep the cameras activated until the interaction has concluded.

The policy allows officers to deactivate the cameras if they determine that under the circumstances, the investigation could be significantly hampered by continuing to record. Under the policy, whenever possible, officers should consult with supervisors before making the decision to deactivate the cameras.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 36 Nay 0 (03/28/2024)