

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy, Attorney General Grewal, and Lieutenant Governor Oliver Visit the Camden County Police Department to Mark First Day of Body-Worn Camera Mandate

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*487 Law Enforcement Agencies Statewide Will Receive Grants to Purchase BWCs*

*New Attorney General Directive Requires a Broader Range of Officers to be Equipped with BWCs*

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy, Attorney General Grewal, and Lieutenant Governor Oliver today joined federal, state, and local officials at the Camden County Police Department (CCPD) to mark the first day of a statewide body-worn camera (BWC) mandate for all uniformed patrol officers, a crucial step on the path toward cultivating trust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

Additionally, Attorney General Grewal today announced grants for 487 law enforcement agencies statewide for BWC purchases. The Governor and Attorney General were joined by Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, Congressman Donald Norcross, Camden Mayor Vic Carstarphen, Camden County Police Chief Gabe Rodriguez, New Jersey State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan, local officials, faith leaders, and community advocates to mark the historic milestone.

"We are witnessing a new chapter in policing in New Jersey with the reforms we are implementing in partnership with law enforcement and community leaders. And, with the body cameras we are funding, we will literally have an objective witness to how police carry out their duties," **said Governor Murphy**. "These powerful devices have been embraced by community members and advocates calling for transparency and by police officers, who see them as a critical tool to protect and assist law enforcement with their difficult jobs. On this important day, we're also happy to announce funding for all 487 agencies that applied for body-worn camera grants."

"This is a new day in policing for our state and our country and I want to thank Governor Murphy, Attorney General Grewal, and our legislators for proactively getting in front of the issue of implementing informed and effective policing practices," **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. "Body cameras are about supporting police officers so they can do their job better. And we are immensely grateful for the job they do every day to keep us safe."

"As we work to strengthen trust between our officers and the diverse communities they serve, the need for accountability and transparency in policing has never been greater," **said Attorney General Grewal**. "Body cameras are a powerful tool to help us in these efforts. By acting as an unbiased witness to law enforcement actions, they help to safeguard equal justice, while also protecting the vast majority of officers who do the right thing day-in and day-out."

"New Jersey State Troopers have been utilizing vehicle-mounted cameras for more than two decades and body-worn cameras for over several months with great success," **said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police**. "Today's announcement is welcome news for both New Jersey law enforcement and those we serve, because this important tool protects not only those we encounter, but the thousands of sworn officers who serve New Jersey with the highest level of professionalism and compassion of any state in the country."

"Reimagining law enforcement is not an easy task, but through innovation, hard work and continuous review, Camden County Police Department officers have not only become a part of the fabric of our community, they have become a national model for community policing," **said Congressman Norcross**. "I thank CCPD Chief Rodriguez for his commitment to our community and Governor Murphy for continuing the work we started in the NJ Senate and here in Camden by bringing body cameras to all uniformed NJ officers. Body cameras are truth tellers, protecting police and the public alike, and this is the logical next step in improving the quality and transparency of law enforcement."

"At a time when we hear so much about difficulties the police departments and minority communities face in many parts of the nation, I am honored to represent a city and county that present a shining example of how police departments and communities should work together for the protection of all of our citizens," **said Senator Nilsa Cruz Perez**.

"I commend Governor Phil Murphy, Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, Attorney General Gurbir Grewal and NJ State Police Colonel Patrick Callahan for coming to Camden to mark this historic day for the State of New Jersey," **said Camden Mayor Victor Carstarphen**. "Our City has realized a significant drop in violent crime and our neighborhoods are now the safest in decades. The Camden County Police Department has been at the forefront as the largest agency in South Jersey to implement body-worn cameras back in 2016. This technology has not only proven to be an effective public safety tool but helps to protect our police officers and our community."

"When we started working with the NYU Policing Project on our body worn camera implementation plan in 2015 we knew that the transparency of body worn cameras would be a strong asset for our work with the community," **CCPD Chief Gabe Rodriguez said**. "Since then, our BWC program has been an invaluable tool and over the last two years our agency has started to use the footage for training- much like a quarterback would review game tape in the film room. It has made us a smarter and stronger organization through the analysis and our ability to deconstruct incidents from this footage. In short, for 21st century policing, these cameras have become critical to our work and underscore our commitment and dedication to officer accountability."

"Growing up in Camden and working in the city as an educator and coach I can tell you accountability and transparency are keys to reconnecting with our community," **Commissioner Al Dyer said**. "Since Metro was created the foundation of the department has been to bridge the gaps that existed between the cops and our community and I believe body worn cameras and solid guidelines have assisted in that process. We still have more work to do, but I want to take this opportunity to applaud the Governor and Lt. Governor for mandating this critical tool for police officers throughout New Jersey."

"I am proud to be a part of a community that continues to be a leader in the fight for social justice. Last summer the world watched as the citizens of Camden along with the city's police, political officials and community leaders joined in the protest against the murder of George Floyd," **said Pastor Steven Mack**. "I look forward to supporting Governor Murphy, Chief Rodriguez and the Camden County Police as they now lead the statewide effort to implement effective community policing strategies."

On Nov. 24, 2020, Governor Murphy signed legislation (S1163 and A4312) requiring that by June 1, 2021, every uniformed patrol officer in New Jersey wear a BWC while on duty. Previously, fewer than half of the law enforcement agencies in the state had BWCs. In 2016, the Camden County Police Department implemented the use of BWCs for every officer working in the community. Governor Murphy believes that the increased use of BWCs is crucial to building trust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve.

In December 2020, Governor Murphy signed a law appropriating \$58 million for grants-in-aid to support the statewide body worn camera program.

Today, Governor Murphy and Attorney General Grewal announced that the State is funding all 487 law enforcement agencies that applied to the Attorney General's Office for grant funding to purchase BWCs and associated equipment. The agencies requested funding to purchase 28,214 cameras at a total cost of approximately \$57.5 million. The Attorney General's Office is administering the grant program on a reimbursement basis, with agencies receiving funding at \$2,038 per camera, which may be used for the purchase of cameras and equipment needed to operate them, and towards the costs of storing BWC footage. Many agencies continue to work toward compliance with the BWC mandate and remain at various stages in the procurement process, which has been impacted by the resulting demand for BWCs.

Outside research also shows BWCs are effective: A 2012 study found that use-of-force by officers wearing cameras fell by 59% and complaints against officers decreased 87% compared to the prior year, when officers were not wearing cameras.

Last week, on May 25, Attorney General Grewal issued Directive 2021-5 and an accompanying body worn camera policy setting foundational standards for the proper use of BWCs by all law enforcement agencies in New Jersey. The Policy expands on a prior directive, Directive 2015-1, and the BWC legislation passed last year, which codified much of Directive 2015-1.

The policy incorporates the legislative command that all uniformed patrol officers be equipped with BWCs and expands upon it, directing that a broad range of officers engaged in additional functions also be equipped with BWCs, including officers assigned to tactical teams, proactive enforcement teams, canine units, or duties involving regular interaction with the public. The policy seeks to further strengthen transparency and public trust by recording a wider range of police-citizen encounters, particularly those with a greater likelihood to result in a use-of-force or internal affairs complaint.

Directive 2021-5 and the Body Worn Camera Directive are posted at: [https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/ag-directive-2021-5\\_BWC-Directive.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/ag-directive-2021-5_BWC-Directive.pdf) ([https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/ag-directive-2021-5\\_BWC-Directive.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/ag-directive-2021-5_BWC-Directive.pdf))

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