

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Bring Changes to the Use of Body Worn Cameras by New Jersey Law Enforcement

11/24/2020

*S1163 Requires Every Patrol Officer to Wear a Body Camera and A4312 Regulates the Use of Body Worn Cameras by Law Enforcement Officers*

*Executive Order Establishes Working Group to Further Facilitate Implementation of Body Worn Cameras*

**TRENTON** – Acting on a commitment to further promote transparency in policing and build trust between police officers and the communities they serve, Governor Phil Murphy today signed two pieces of legislation (S1163 and A4312), which concern the use of body worn cameras by members of law enforcement. The Governor also signed executive Order No. 201, which establishes a 14-member Interagency Working Group to provide recommendations to the Governor’s Office and Attorney General regarding technology solutions to facilitate the statewide implementation of body worn cameras in law enforcement agencies. The Working Group will work to identify barriers to adopting body worn cameras and recommend technology solutions to facilitate their implementation.

“We’ve made it clear that New Jersey will be second-to-none in enacting vital reforms to promote transparency and boost public confidence in law enforcement,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Body worn cameras are a wise all-around investment in public safety that not only redouble our commitment to transparency and accountability, but also ensure that members of law enforcement are equipped with an important tool to help them carry out their sworn duties. Today represents another step down what we know is a long road to full understanding and lasting trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.”

“New Jersey has made great strides to promote a greater degree of professionalism, accountability, and transparency within our law enforcement agencies, and our state is committed to ensuring that our officers feel supported when they are in the line of duty,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs**. “This legislation being signed today is about developing greater accountability and establishing trust between police officers and the people who rely on them every day to keep our communities safe.”

“We are in the midst of a national reckoning on racial justice, which has highlighted a lack of trust between law enforcement and many of the communities we serve,” **said Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal**. “Since day one, we have been committed to rebuilding and strengthening that trust, and we know that body worn cameras are an important tool in those efforts. They encourage professionalism, promote better interactions between police and the public, and have been universally welcomed by agencies across our state. Today, we not only take an important step towards the uniform, statewide use of body worn cameras, but also towards making New Jersey a national leader on yet another set of policing policies and best practices. I thank the Governor and the Legislature for their leadership and support in these efforts.”

  
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"Today is a great day for New Jersey law enforcement and the communities we serve. The statewide implementation of body worn cameras represents an important step in strengthening the bonds of trust between police departments and communities while fostering greater transparency and accountability," **said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police.** "The New Jersey State Police has learned that recording interactions with the public from patrol vehicles for the last two decades has been a valuable asset in protecting both our citizens and our troopers alike. The addition of body worn camera technology is yet another layer of protection for our men and women in law enforcement and the communities they serve."

"I would like to thank Governor Murphy and his staff for their relentless efforts in making sure all officers have body cameras for the protection of the community as well as law enforcement," **said Reverend John Taylor, New Jersey State Police Chaplain.** "What a great day for New Jersey to be leading the way for the nation."

"The body worn camera has proven to be an excellent tool for law enforcement officers," **said Quovella Spruill, Executive Vice President, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives NJ Chapter.** "Unfortunately, the principal detraction to this valuable technology is the cost. This has made them unattainable for many jurisdictions. These bills for body worn camera usage and funding are long overdue. Law enforcement and the community agree on the transparency needed to aid in protecting everyone's rights. As a mother of teenagers, woman of color, and law enforcement executive, I see how these tools can better serve in improving our relationships with our youth and citizens."

The signing of this bill into law today is a win for our communities and law enforcement," **said Carolyn Chang, Past President and Current Social Justice Committee Chair, Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey.** "On behalf of the Association of Black Women Lawyers of New Jersey, we thank the Governor and leaders in both chambers for enacting this new law."

"I commend Governor Phil Murphy for taking the necessary steps to ensure the statewide use of this effective public safety tool," **said Camden Mayor Frank Moran.** "In our community, body worn cameras have proven to be instrumental in the protection and accountability of police officers and residents alike."

"Today, as law enforcement, we must work with our community and policy leaders with reflection and deliberation on the topics of policing and social justice reform," **said Wayne Blanchard, President of the State Troopers Fraternal Association.** "When we have conversations, we get results that equal progress. I thank the bill sponsors and Governor Murphy and his team for including the STFA in the important conversations with respect to legislation on BWC."

"This bill will ensure transparency for both the public and our law enforcement members," **said Pat Colligan, President, New Jersey State Police Benevolent Association (NJSPBA).** "It will enhance officer safety and help us continue the extraordinarily high level of service we continue to provide the residents of our state."

"The Fraternal Order of Police endorses Assembly Bill 4312 and its passage into law today," **said Bob Fox, President of the New Jersey Fraternal Order of Police.** "Body worn cameras are a definitive tool to ensuring the safety of our brave men and woman in law enforcement, as well as, the people they serve. Body worn cameras represent another tool for law enforcement to utilize in the quest for the safety and security of the people while providing the latest technology in our pursuit of transparency. This law and its funding will help help continue the public trust and ensures the technology-based applications are used for the betterment of all New Jersey residents."

S1163 requires every uniformed State, county, and municipal patrol law enforcement officer to wear a body worn camera, subject to funding appropriated by the Legislature. Exceptions are permitted for officers engaged in undercover assignments, meeting with confidential informants, performing administrative or non-uniformed duties, and when directed by a superior officer for a lawful purpose.

The bill was sponsored by Senators Shirley Turner and Linda Greenstein, and Assemblymembers Herb Conaway and Cleopatra Tucker.

"Police body cameras have become an essential part of community policing today," **said Assemblymembers Cleopatra Tucker, Herb Conaway, Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, and Shavonda Sumter, in a joint statement.** "They aim to ensure accountability for any actions which take place during a police stop, whether it is by the officer or a resident. Tensions surrounding community policing escalated after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The distrust between communities of color and law enforcement was once again highlighted in the national spotlight. A body camera is only one way of ensuring greater transparency and accountability for law enforcement, and to rebuilding community relations; however, it will be a uniquely powerful tool in getting there."

A4312 regulates the use of body worn cameras by law enforcement officers. Under the bill, officers would be required to keep the camera activated when responding to a call for service or when initiating a law enforcement or investigative encounter. When immediate activation of the camera is impossible or dangerous, an officer would be required to activate the camera at the first reasonable opportunity to do so. Officers would be required to notify subjects that the camera is activated and, under certain conditions, may deactivate a camera upon the subject's request. To protect the privacy of civilians in sensitive situations, the bill limits the use of body worn cameras while officers are on school property, in medical facilities, and in houses of worship.

The bill was sponsored by Assemblymembers Verlina Reynolds-Jackson, Shavonda Sumter, and Cleopatra Tucker, and Senators Nia Gill and Shirley Turner.

"As we work to improve policing in New Jersey, setting clear guidelines for body camera usage is crucial for transparency, accountability and public confidence, safeguarding both citizens and law enforcement officers," **said Senator Gill.** "These regulations will provide clear guidelines for how these body cameras are used allowing for consistency and reliability when footage is needed and pulled."

"In recent years, body cameras have become a valuable tool for transparency, exposing instances of police misconduct and helping to hold officers accountable," **said Senator Turner.** "They also protect officers against false accusations and reduce the legal costs associated with use-of-force lawsuits, which are ultimately paid for by taxpayers. Body cameras will help to create safer communities, and both officers and civilians will benefit greatly from rebuilding trust between police officers and the communities they have sworn to serve and protect."

A copy of Executive Order No. 201 can be found here (<https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-201.pdf>).

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