

Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy and Attorney General Grewal Release Recommendations of Interagency Working Group on Body Worn Cameras

04/9/2021

AG's Office is administering \$58 million grant program for police departments to purchase body worn cameras, which must be worn by all uniformed patrol officers by June 1

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy and Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal today released the final report ([https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcjcke/j83xrcb/rq3bro_!!J30X0ZmC1oQtbA!c-yBcx49uSEtuRrVGyHfLLPRghSuvIUVLJnvUrN6nYsp1U2sGiTMm01pgSdqX6K9tqmvSUTF\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https://t.e2ma.net/click/jcjcke/j83xrcb/rq3bro_!!J30X0ZmC1oQtbA!c-yBcx49uSEtuRrVGyHfLLPRghSuvIUVLJnvUrN6nYsp1U2sGiTMm01pgSdqX6K9tqmvSUTF$)) of the Interagency Working Group on Body Worn Cameras, which the Governor created by Executive Order 201 to provide advice and recommendations regarding technology solutions to assist with the deployment of body worn cameras by all law enforcement agencies in New Jersey.

On Nov. 24, 2020, Governor Murphy signed historic legislation, P.L. 2020, Chapter 128, requiring that by June 1 every uniformed patrol officer in New Jersey wear a body worn camera (“BWC”) while on duty. Previously, fewer than half of the law enforcement agencies in the state had BWCs. In January, the Governor signed another law appropriating \$58 million for grants-in-aid to support the statewide body worn camera program. The Attorney General’s Office is currently administering a grant program to distribute those funds to eligible police departments on a reimbursement basis.

The price tag to fully equip a police department to use body worn cameras goes beyond the cost of the devices itself, and includes storage, licensing, and maintenance fees. The 14-member Interagency Working Group – which included representatives of state agencies, law enforcement, and the legal and social justice communities – focused its efforts on finding ways to reduce the initial cost of implementing body worn cameras. It issued three recommendations about potential cost-saving methods, and a fourth policy-based recommendation calling for the Attorney General to issue guidance to expand the types of officers who must wear BWCs beyond the law’s mandate.

“We welcome the recommendations of the working group, which focus on ways for government and police to work together to save money in purchasing body worn cameras and the related technology needed to operate them,” **said Governor Murphy**. “Because of their power to promote transparency and accountability, body worn cameras are a vital tool for building trust between our police officers and the diverse communities they serve— a trust shaken by the racial injustices we have witnessed across the United States. New Jersey proudly leads the nation when it comes to policing reforms designed to serve fairness, justice, and the safety of residents and officers alike.”

Attorney General Grewal will review the Working Group’s recommendations and engage with community stakeholders as he considers revisions to the existing AG Directive governing BWCs. Although another new law will regulate use of BWCs beginning in June, it is generally consistent with the more comprehensive AG Directive, which will remain in effect and be updated as needed.

“We will carefully review these recommendations as we work to support police departments in the statewide deployment of these important devices,” **said Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal**. “Body worn cameras have the support of police as well as the public, because the accountability they provide is mutual— everyone behaves better when they know they are on camera. Body cameras not only promote safer and more professional law enforcement interactions, they assist police in gathering evidence and serve to reduce unfounded complaints against officers. Officers report that body-worn cameras can even help to de-escalate volatile situations.”

The Interagency Working Group on Body Worn Cameras made the following recommendations, as set forth more fully in their Final Report:

1. The Working Group recommended against a single statewide storage system for BWC footage, stating that for the short and medium term, creation of such a system would be time and cost prohibitive. They noted that there may be technological advances in the future to make such a system more tenable.
1. The Working Group recommended that the New Jersey Department of the Treasury aggressively negotiate with the five state-approved BWC vendors for an increased volume discount based on statewide purchasing for both BWCs and the storage to hold BWC footage, specifically focusing on cloud-based storage solutions.
1. The Working Group recommended that law enforcement agencies seek to purchase, through the State’s contract for BWCs, cloud-based storage, as opposed to on-premises storage options, provided appropriate privacy and security systems are in place.
1. The Working Group recommended that the Attorney General issue guidance expanding the types of officers who will be required to use body worn cameras beyond the uniformed patrol officers mandated in P.L. 2020, Chapter 128 to include additional officers who are members of tactical teams, commonly known as SWAT or emergency response teams, or members of proactive enforcement teams, sometimes known as “crime suppression units.”

Information regarding the Body Worn Camera Grant Program can be found at: https://www.nj.gov/oag/grants/BWC_Program-Administration-and-Guidelines.pdf (https://www.nj.gov/oag/grants/BWC_Program-Administration-and-Guidelines.pdf).

Application documents for the grant program can be found at: https://www.nj.gov/oag/grants/BWC_Application.pdf (https://www.nj.gov/oag/grants/BWC_Program-Administration-and-Guidelines.pdf).

Governor Murphy and Attorney General Grewal thank the members of the Interagency Working Group for their devoted work and elucidating report.

Governor Phil Murphy

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