

For the record, my name is Paul Schnell. I'm the police chief in Maplewood. I'm here today speaking on behalf of the Law Enforcement Coalition. The coalition is made up of the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, the Minnesota Sheriff's Association and the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association.

Collectively, our associations represent more than 10,000 sworn law enforcement administrators and officers in communities large and small across the state of Minnesota.

The Law Enforcement Coalition supports the bill before you today. We believe it effectively addresses three important issues around body-worn cameras:

1. Personal privacy
2. Officer accountability
3. Public transparency

I'll start with personal privacy. This bill protects the privacy of citizens and victims who come in contact with police officers – whether willingly or unwillingly, regardless if they're inside their own homes or in the middle of the street. The data classification proposed in this bill protects the privacy of crime victims, witnesses to crime and even the average Minnesotan who might ask a police officer for directions or – in a hurry - gets ticketed going 40 miles per hour in a 30 mile per hour zone. This bill prevents an ex-spouse, a current employer or a nosy neighbor from obtaining the video and seeing people in what very well could be their most vulnerable and embarrassing moments. The bill also reflects the dynamic nature of the data being captured in order to protect the privacy of citizens, families, and victims.

In addition, we believe it's important to note that many – if not most - crimes are solved, and the vast majority of suspects are arrested - because of the information provided to us from people.

As police chiefs and police officers, we work hard to build and maintain trust with our citizens. We know their willingness to talk to us – to tell us what they know – is crucial to solving crimes and arresting suspects. If we don't protect their privacy and the sanctity of the conversations they have with us, our jobs will only become more difficult and our ability to solve crimes will become more challenging. I know this would have a direct impact on the safety of our communities.

Secondly, officer accountability. This bill ensures it. Most importantly, the people who are videotaped by body-worn cameras will be able to obtain the footage and distribute the footage in whatever way they choose. More specifically, if someone feels they were treated unfairly, inappropriately or unconstitutionally, they have the legal right, under this bill, to obtain the footage and post it on their social media pages and give it to the traditional news media for all the public to see. The bill also allows for a representative to have access to the data if an individual is killed in an encounter with police.

Which leads to our third point – public transparency. The bill classifies any video captured of a police/ citizen encounter that results in substantial bodily harm as public information. In other words, video from officer-involved shootings, or any other event causing substantial bodily harm, will be available to the public and the news media. Over the past two years, law enforcement nationally and locally has faced immense scrutiny over use-of-force polices and procedures. Law enforcement agencies across the country and in Minnesota are re-examining their own polices and re-thinking their approach to critical incidents. They're asking themselves if there are things we can be doing differently - doing better - to avoid these tragedies from taking place.

We support the language in this bill that allows for additional, public examination of these tragic incidents. The intent of the language reflects what we as a profession are trying to accomplish – to prevent these unfortunate incidents from happening in the first place.

Finally, I'd like to address the process by which we got here today and thank Chair Scott and Rep. Cornish for their work on this issue.

Over the past 18 months, we've been working with lawmakers, privacy advocates, crime victim groups, the Department of Administration and citizens to come to a thoughtful consensus on body-worn cameras, particularly the proper classification of the data. We have all testified publicly at multiple legislative hearings and discussed our concerns privately in several meetings.

A year and a half later, it's clear we disagree on many aspects of this debate and that might never change. But I do think we all agree that body-worn cameras are a powerful new tool for law enforcement. They have the ability to improve evidence collection, maintain trust with our communities, resolve citizen complaints and enhance professionalism in policing.

We believe the bill before you is a compromise - it balances the privacy interests of individuals who have contact with law enforcement with the equally compelling interests of our communities to ensure trust in our police officers.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Law Enforcement Coalition.