



Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association

DEDICATED TO THE IDEALS OF PROFESSIONAL POLICING

September 11, 2015

Dear Commissioner of Administration,

On behalf of more than 300 Minnesota police chiefs, I am writing to show our collective support for the temporary classification of body-worn camera data until the Minnesota legislature establishes law governing such data.

Unlike police squad car cameras, body-worn cameras collect video footage inside people's homes, schools and medical facilities, where there is a reasonable privacy expectation. These cameras capture incidents up close often during traumatic, revealing and personal incidents.

Currently, under Minn. Stat. 13.82, much of the sensitive video body-worn cameras collect is public data, and in a day and age where a video clip can go "viral," protections must be in place.

Without such protections, victims of domestic abuse, criminal sexual assault and other crimes involving sensitive issues may be reluctant to provide statements on camera or cooperate for fear of retaliation. Such reactions could allow perpetrators to continue preying on our communities.

Unprotected data would also provide the general public and suspects "virtual" entry into victims and witnesses' homes, undermining their safety and privacy.

We can no longer delay implementing body-worn cameras until the legislature resolves these classification issues. According to Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) surveys, at least 40 Minnesota police departments are using body-worn cameras, which are helping gather critical evidence and keep officers accountable.

Furthermore, Minnesota's police chiefs generally support body-worn cameras as an evidence collection and officer accountability tool, according to an MCPA August internal, non-scientific poll. However, chiefs also share an overwhelming concern about protecting people's privacy, with 60% of responding chiefs rating privacy issues among their main concerns in deploying the devices. Nearly 80% said body-worn camera footage captured in a residence should be classified in statute as private/non-public.

A recent non-partisan Minnesota Senate poll taken at the state fair reflects law enforcement's concern, with more than 60% of respondents saying there should be limited public access to police body-camera footage and 14% saying the footage should be strictly private.

MCPA feels the temporary classification application currently before the Department of Administration strikes the proper balance among three key pillars: protecting people's privacy, gathering evidence to solve and prosecute crimes, and promoting accountability and transparency in the profession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Skoogman', with a stylized, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Andy Skoogman
Executive Director
Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association