

FLOOR ALERT

AB 1940 UNDERMINES THE REASON FOR DEPLOYING BODY-CAMS

AB 1940 (Cooper) will make it the policy of all law enforcement agencies statewide, that an officer is allowed to view body-cam footage before filing an initial report. One of the most important reasons to deploy a body-cam program is to increase transparency and improve the accountability of law enforcement, and this is directly at odds with AB 1940.

AB 1940 WIDENS THE BREACH BETWEEN OFFICERS AND THE PUBLIC

Instead of increasing transparency and accountability, and thereby increasing public trust and participation, AB 1940 makes police activities even more opaque and makes the gap between citizens and police that much harder to bridge. The inclusion of this officer review clause seems to work directly against the goals of body-cam programs, but the absence of almost all areas of public concern in the section which suggests what should be included in each policy is just as worrisome.

AB 1940 IGNORES RESEARCH AND PUBLIC CONCERN

Research has consistently shown that there are great benefits and great pitfalls in the use of body-cams. There has been a great deal of research by many groups including the **Department of Justice OJP Diagnostic Center**, **Community Oriented Policing Services**, the **Police Executive Research Forum**, the **Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights**, the **National Institute of Justice** and many more from single departments to national and international agencies. The vast majority of this research agrees on certain minimum requirements for department policies regarding body-cams, most of which are ignored by AB 1940. These glaring omissions include: officer discretion on when to record, protections for personal privacy of citizens (e.g. victims), prohibition of officer pre-report viewing (this is recommended by multiple DOJ sources and a high majority of police departments, agencies and researchers), footage retention, tampering or misuse protections, footage availability to the public especially individuals filing complaints, and the use of biometric technologies.

AB 1940 COULD RUIN A GOOD IDEA

There are many good reasons for departments to implement body-cam programs, for the benefit of officers and citizens. However, there is a huge cost (buying the cameras, training the officers, storage, technical experts...) to departments that adopt body-cam technology. If we're going to curtail some of the benefits and give no guidance on most of the others we may end up discouraging departments from adopting this potentially very helpful technology.