Legislation Details (With Text)

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File created:	12/8/2016		**In control:**	Committee on Public Safety	
On agenda:			**Final action:**		
Title:	Authorizing the Council Committee on Public Safety to hold hearings examining the ongoing implementation of body-worn cameras by the Philadelphia Police Department, to determine whether the Department's policy for body-worn cameras promotes transparent and accountable policing practices, and whether the program is fair and equitable to both police officers and the residents of Philadelphia.				
Sponsors:	Councilmember Jones, Councilmember Gym, Councilmember Quiñones Sánchez				
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result	Tally
3/13/2017	0	Committee on Public Safety	HEARING NOTICES SENT		
3/13/2017	0	Committee on Public Safety	HEARING HELD		
3/13/2017	0	Committee on Public Safety	RECESSED		
12/8/2016	0	CITY COUNCIL	Introduced and Ordered Placed on This Week's Final Passage Calendar	Pass	
12/8/2016	0	CITY COUNCIL	ADOPTED & REFERRED		

Authorizing the Council Committee on Public Safety to hold hearings examining the ongoing implementation of body-worn cameras by the Philadelphia Police Department, to determine whether the Department’s policy for body-worn cameras promotes transparent and accountable policing practices, and whether the program is fair and equitable to both police officers and the residents of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Police Department began piloting body-worn cameras starting in December 2014, with selected officers from the 22nd Police District. This pilot program was enacted to enhance officer safety, strengthen public trust, and provide an impartial measurement for self-critique and field evaluations during officer training; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Police Department has developed “Directive 4.21,” its current policy on body-worn cameras. The Directive was issued and effective on January 15, 2016 and was last updated on June 21, 2016. The Directive is published on the Department’s website; and

WHEREAS, In August of 2016, a “Body Worn Camera Policy Scorecard,” developed by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and Upturn, evaluated the body-worn camera policies of 50 major police departments around the country, including the Philadelphia Police Department’s policy, on eight civil rights dimensions; and

WHEREAS, While the Philadelphia Police Department’s policy excelled in some measures,the report found that the current body-worn camera policy: (1) does not prohibit officers from viewing relevant footage before

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filing an initial written report or statement; (2) does not require the deletion of "unflagged" footage within six months; (3) does not require that all access to recorded footage will be logged or audited; (4) does not allow individuals who are filing police misconduct complaints to view relevant footage; and (5) does not place any limits on the use of biometric technologies, such as facial recognition, to identify individuals in footage; and

WHEREAS, The "Body Worn Camera Policy Scorecard" also found that Philadelphia struggled with lack of capacity and limited ability to retain video footage. The Philadelphia Police Department's retention period for recordings is thirty days, unless the video is required for evidentiary purposes; and

WHEREAS, The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services has previously recommended that the Philadelphia Police Department ensures that it deploys body-worn cameras in a way that is in line with community values and expectations of privacy; and

WHEREAS, The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, co-chaired by former Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles Ramsey, stated in its final report that police departments "need to consider ways to involve the public in discussions related to the protection of their privacy and civil liberties prior to implementing new technology, as well as work with the public and other partners in the justice system to develop appropriate policies and procedures for use"; and

WHEREAS, High-profile incidents in other cities across the country highlight how body-worn cameras have failed in the most critical moments, and have an uneven record of rebuilding community trust. In Baton Rouge, cameras became "dislodged" from officers' uniforms. In Albuquerque, officers allegedly deleted and altered "problematic" footage. In Chicago and elsewhere, officers have repeatedly failed to turn on their cameras. In Charlotte, footage was only released after a period of intense public pressure. These incidents demonstrate why it is vital for the Philadelphia Police Department to adopt clear and effective policy safeguards for the use of body cameras, as well as swiftly enforce appropriate disciplinary measures when officers violate the Department's policies; and

WHEREAS, Currently, there is no requirement for the Department to publish periodic reports about the ongoing implementation and use of body cameras. Further investigation is needed to determine what information and statistics are necessary and appropriate for the Department to release on a quarterly basis, so that the residents of Philadelphia can continue to understand and evaluate the impact that cameras are having on local communities; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Police Department reportedly plans to outfit all 6,500 of its officers with body-worn cameras by 2019. In order to re-establish trust between our communities and the police department which serves them, the City must strive to conform with national standards, and afford citizens adequate opportunities to have input into the policies that directly impact them; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby authorizes the Council Committee on Public Safety to hold hearings examining the ongoing implementation of body-worn cameras by the Philadelphia Police Department, to determine whether the Department's policy for body-worn cameras promotes transparent and accountable policing practices, and whether the program is fair and equitable to both police officers and the residents of Philadelphia.

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