

SHERIFF

KING COUNTY

KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
516 Third Avenue, W-116
Seattle, WA 98104

John Urquhart
Sheriff

February 10, 2015

The Honorable Laurie Jenkins, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: SUPPORTING HB 1917

Dear Representative Jenkins:


I am writing in strong support of HB 1917. HB 1917 would allow police departments in Washington State to implement the use of body cameras while mitigating the financial impact to our respective local governments. Body cameras are a critical tool for improving trust in our police departments because they allow for an objective third-party recording of specific police contacts or crimes to be evaluated at a later date. But we cannot use body cameras until state law is modified to prevent individuals from abusing the Public Records Act by making broad, sweeping, and onerous public records requests that create the potential liability to bankrupt our governments.

Often times during investigations, we find that we are faced with competing versions of the same events. Incorporating body cameras into our regular patrol operations will result in better behavior both by my deputies and by the public. The use of body cameras elsewhere has resulted in far fewer complaints against the police, and I am confident we will see similar results in Washington State.

Finally, HB 1917 will allow local governments to redirect resources to other critical needs by allowing the courts and police departments to resolve criminal cases and internal investigations in a more efficient manner. Body camera footage cuts both ways. It will help both implicate and exonerate.

HB 1917 allows citizens to hold their government accountable while balancing the very real privacy concerns those who interact with law enforcement have. As a tool, body cameras have the potential to greatly improve the trust between law enforcement and the communities we protect. I strongly urge your support.

Respectfully,



John Urquhart
Sheriff