

June 8, 2015

United States Department of Justice

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Office of Justice Programs

810 Seventh Street, NW

Washington, D.C. 20531

**Re: BJA - Body-Worn Camera Pilot Implementation Program, FY 2015**

Dear Director:

I write to express my strongest possible support for the application by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police to fund the purchase and implementation of a Body-Worn Camera Program. Pittsburgh is ready for the Program, having piloted the technology already.

I am a law professor at the University of Pittsburgh, and I have been engaged in research and study of police use of body-worn camera (BWC) systems for more than five years. My journal article, "Picture This: Body-Worn Video Devices (Head Cams) as Tools for Ensuring Fourth Amendment Compliance by Police," published in volume 43 of the Texas Tech Law Review in 2010, was the first published study of the technology by a legal academic, and it remains the leading publication on the subject among law school researchers nationwide. I became aware of BWC technology in 2009, while serving on a public commission on Taser use by police. The manufacturer of Taser devices had created one of the first BWC systems, and through the contact I had with Taser representatives to the commission, I happened to be one of the first in the U.S. to see Taser's BWC technology in operation.


BWC systems have been in use in the U.K. since the mid-2000s. Police in the U.K. tested the technology, and they found it had many benefits, among them recording evidence accurately, in real time, and reducing public order offenses among those who encounter a police officer wearing a camera. Only in the past year has U.S. law enforcement begun to catch up, due in large part to the events beginning in August of 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri. American research, particularly the limited studies in Rialto, CA, and Mesa, AZ, suggest that the technology could have a strong beneficial impact in the U.S. In particular, these studies have keyed in on what one police chief has called the "civilizing effect" on both sides of the camera: when cameras were present in the Rialto study, complaints against police fell by about 90 percent, compared to situations in which cameras were not present. Similarly, with cameras, police officers used force about 60 percent less often than did officers without them. This makes BWC a uniquely promising technology.

The Pittsburgh Bureau of Police is itself uniquely positioned to make good use of the Implementation Program. The Bureau began testing BWC technology in 2012 on a limited basis, and conducted a trial use program in 2013, assigning BWC equipment to officers in the

motorcycle and bicycle units. Though not large enough to produce validated data, this trial program showed real promise, and the Bureau began drafting a BWC policy for the use of BWCs by the entire department. The draft policy became widely known in policing circles, and many other departments used it in creating their own policies. In September of 2014, the beginning of the administration of Pittsburgh's new Chief of Police, Cameron McLay, has brought new energy to the subject, because Chief McLay is a strong proponent of BWC. Beginning in January of 2015, Chief McLay organized a Project Team in the Bureau to study and re-work the draft policy. As a member of the Allegheny County Criminal Justice Advisory Board Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Body Camera Committee, I have participated, and will continue to assist the Bureau, in establishing policy which is legal and ethical. By doing so, I will use my expertise and experience on the subject to aid in establishing model protocol that could be used nationally in an effort to dissuade any privacy fears residents may have. I can attest to the fact that there is strong support for the use of BWC systems within the leadership of the department, and upon receipt of funding, there will be a strong momentum from those on the committee towards establishing a body worn camera program city-wide. This makes the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police an ideal grantee for the Implementation Program.

I would urge you to give the application of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police your most careful consideration. This is an agency that believes in the potential of BWCs to help police departments and to ensure police accountability to the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Harris', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

David A. Harris

Distinguished Faculty Scholar and Professor of Law

University of Pittsburgh School of Law