



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



Kevin Davis
Police Commissioner

November 16, 2015

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Attention: Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

**Re: City Council Bill No. 15-0255R
Request for State Action – Special Sales Tax on Handguns and Handgun
Ammunition to Fund Police Body Cameras**

Dear Council President Young and Members of the City Council:

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD or the Department) has reviewed Council Bill 15-0255R. This resolution calls on the General Assembly to enact, and the Governor to sign, legislation establishing a 10% special sales tax on handguns and handgun ammunition to generate an ongoing revenue stream that could be used to provide matching grants to local jurisdictions to obtain and maintain body cameras for their officers. The BPD takes a **favorable** position on this resolution.

The BPD launched a body worn camera (BWC) pilot program on October 26. The pilot consists of 155 BWCs from three different vendors and will run until December 18. The BWCs are currently being tested by officers in the Central, Eastern, and Western Districts, as well as by the Special Enforcement Unit as part of an ongoing procurement. BPD will make a contract award to one of the vendors in the early part of 2016 and begin full implementation of a BWC program. The Department will purchase 2,500 cameras and roll them out over a two year period. While BPD has a total of \$5 million allocated in FY2016 for BWCs, it has not yet been determined how the BWC program will be funded in the long term. A special sales tax on handguns and handgun ammunition could create an ongoing revenue stream for BWC programs, thus helping the City pay for BWCs without straining other sources of taxpayer funds. Because this proposal could help ensure the long term success of BWCs, the BPD is pleased to support this resolution.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The Department looks forward to working with the City Council on this matter.

Sincerely,

Andrew G. Vetter
Director of Government Affairs

c/o 242 West 29th Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21211-2908

