



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Henry

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Request for State Action - Special Sales Tax on Handguns and Handgun Ammunition to Fund Police Body Cameras

FOR the purpose of calling 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.

Recitals

There is a broad and growing consensus at all levels of government that police officers should be outfitted with body cameras to record their interactions with the public. These cameras have proven to be effective in gathering evidence to resolve disputes about interactions, protecting both citizens and officers from false allegations, and are also believed to help moderate behavior by all sides in encounters that they know are being filmed.

However, despite the belief that police body cameras can improve policing and community relations, their deployment has been slowed by concerns about costs. The up-front costs for outfitting a large police force with cameras can be substantial; and the ongoing data storage costs generated by the thousands of hours of footage created by the cameras can be even more significant. Some jurisdictions have found that data storage costs alone can run into the millions of dollars annually.

Cost concerns shouldn't be allowed to get in the way of an innovation with the potential to transform policing for the better, but its also important to implement body camera programs in a way that doesn't drain resources from other vital policing and public order needs. Ideally, new revenue streams should be identified to enable police departments to deploy body cameras without sacrificing other existing priorities.

One idea that has been considered in other jurisdictions, and which would make a great deal of sense for Maryland, is a special sales tax on handguns and handgun ammunition. Such a tax on the state level would 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.

Maximizing the rapid deployment of body cameras throughout Maryland needs to be a public safety priority. Implementing a 10% special sales tax on handguns and handgun ammunition would provide a steady revenue stream to enable police departments throughout our state to quickly and sustainably deploy body cameras without detracting from existing programs.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council 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.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Governor, the Honorable Chairs and Members of the Baltimore City House and Senate Delegations to the Maryland General Assembly, the President of the Maryland Senate, the Maryland House Speaker, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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