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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
PERMANENT SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
INTELLIGENCE

12.9.2024

Attorney General Merrick Garland  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland,

Thank you for your leadership as our nation's Attorney General. I write out of concern over a growing problem: as police departments across the country have expanded the use of body-worn cameras, increasingly they are struggling to store the data produced by these cameras.

In 2019, the Washington Post reported that many small police departments were being forced to give up their body-worn camera programs due to the high costs of storing the data these cameras produce.<sup>1</sup> Since then, the problem has only continued worsen. For example, in Muskingum County, Ohio, the long-term costs were a major barrier for their camera program, despite one-time infusions of federal cash designed to help localities recover from the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Today, the county has still not implemented a body-worn camera program. This year, data storage and other technical hurdles have delayed the rollout of body-worn cameras to the Pennsylvania State Police and driven the cost of the program from \$4.4 million to roughly \$10 million a year.<sup>3</sup>

The federal government is providing support to local departments as they stand up these programs. However, as the long-term data storage costs are an underdiscussed aspect of these important innovations, I ask that the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Community Oriented Policing Services do more to publicize that federal grant money can be used for data storage investments whenever they are soliciting funding applications.

Second, I ask that planning for data storage needs remain a central focus of the federal government's implementation of grants designed to increase the use of body-worn cameras. For

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<sup>1</sup> [Some U.S. police departments dump body-camera programs amid high costs - The Washington Post](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Body cameras: Long-term costs is a barrier for some law enforcement \(zanesvilletimesrecorder.com\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Pa. state police to expedite body camera rollout after Philly official's excessive force claim • Pennsylvania Capital-Star \(penncapital-star.com\)](#)

example, as the Department of Justice works with the White House to outline the President's Budget Request for the coming fiscal year, the need for increased funding for body-worn camera data storage should be emphasized. This need should also be emphasized in the Department's discussions with congressional appropriators. As the DOJ reviews the applications from state and local police departments across the country, I ask that the Department prioritize applications with robust plans for how they will deal with the data these cameras create. Furthermore, I ask that the Department of Justice consider whether it has the legal authority to award grants to jurisdictions solely for covering the cost of purchasing storage.

Third, the President has signed an executive order that dramatically expands the use of body worn cameras across the federal law enforcement.<sup>4</sup> I request that the Department provide an update on their progress towards compliance with this executive order, and that any unmet costs related to data storage be highlighted in budget requests of Congress.

Lastly, I request that the Department of Justice prioritize collecting information on the data storage needs of police departments across the country by adding a question on data storage to the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS). LEMAS is conducted periodically, most recently in 2020, and is an important tool for assessing the thousands of local law enforcement agencies across the country.<sup>5</sup> LEMAS already includes questions on what cameras and other equipment are being used by local jurisdictions, so the survey should also consider how the data being documented is stored. Providing information about the availability of federal grants to address these issues will help both federal and state policy makers across the country, and will help inform their response to this relatively new challenge.

Sincerely,



Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> [Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety | The White House](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics \(LEMAS\) | Bureau of Justice Statistics \(ojp.gov\)](#)