



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board Takes Action on Sheriff Body-Worn Cameras

The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to seek expert advice and a cost analysis as it continues to consider body cameras for the Sheriff's Department.

"It is imperative that we uplift transparency in law enforcement practices, and body-worn cameras can be a valuable tool for that, as well as for improving the behavior of both deputies and civilians, reducing excessive force and wrongful convictions, and enhancing police-community relations," said Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, lead author of the motion. "This technology, however, raises many sensitive policy, legal and practical concerns that must first be resolved."

"Body cameras are being implemented by roughly two-thirds of major law enforcement agencies in the country," said Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, who co-authored the motion. "With the proper underlying policy decisions, body cameras can be effective in reducing complaints, and they tend to de-escalate negative interactions between civilians and law enforcement officers. Today's action creates a process, supported by systematic engagement with the community, that will help all of us collectively make a decision on how best to proceed to build accountability, transparency, and trust."

In 2012, the Citizen's Blue Ribbon Commission on Jail Violence was the first entity to recommend that the Sheriff's Department use "lapel cameras as an investigative tool" to

address problematic use of force. The Office of Inspector General (OIG) made a series of similar policy proposals in 2015.

The Sheriff's Department and County Chief Executive Office proposed an implementation plan to the Board in October 2017. In July 2018, the Civilian Oversight Commission (CoC) recommended implementing a body-worn camera program over two years. These recommendations were informed by national research, several community town halls, and over 2,500 survey responses.

Today's motion by Supervisors Ridley-Thomas and Solis directs the County CEO, in consultation with the Sheriff, County Counsel, COC and OIG to engage a consultant who would make recommendations within 120 days on proposed policies, procedures, deployment plan, staffing levels and operations.

The motion also directs the CEO and Sheriff, in consultation with the consultant, OIG and COC, to give the Board an updated cost analysis of body-worn cameras, and compare it with those of other jurisdictions.

The leaders of both the CoC and OIG spoke out in support of the motion.

"From possibly reducing the amount of excessive force and citizen complaints to more reliable results in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings, we believe that body-worn cameras are an essential component of modern community policing," OIG CoC Executive Director Brian Williams said. "Obtaining the cameras and establishing solid policies and procedures for their use, we believe, should be a priority for the Sheriff's Department and the County."

"Body cameras are required equipment for a large urban police force," added Inspector General Max Huntsman. "Not having them is like leaving every crime scene without collecting blood samples, not dusting for finger prints, and not taking photos."

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