

**Erie County Corrections
Specialist Advisory Board
Old County Hall**

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July 26, 2022

Legislator Howard Johnson
Chair, Public Safety Committee
92 Franklin Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14202

Legislator Johnson:

The Erie County Corrections Specialist Advisory Board (ECCSAB) requests that the Erie County Legislature Public Safety Committee call on the Erie County Probation Department to appear and discuss the potential implementation of body cameras for probation officers working within the Erie County Probation Department.

According to a 2022 report issued by the National Institute of Justice, Body-worn cameras are widely used by state and local law enforcement agencies in the United States. They are worn principally by officers in the performance of duties that require open and direct contact with the public.

The intent of body-worn camera programs is to equip officers with video and audio recording devices to: (1) document law enforcement interactions with the public; (2) to capture and maintain records of crimes in progress for evidence in court; (3) to document law enforcement response during the discovery of evidence, investigation into crimes, or calls for service by the public; (4) to improve community relations and transparency; (5) to mitigate potentially confrontational interactions between law enforcement and public through presence of the cameras; (6) to prevent and better resolve complaints made against law enforcement; and (7) to serve in training.

Since 2019, the Buffalo police department has made use of a body-worn camera program, distributing cameras to all sworn police officers. In 2021, through recommendation by this advisory body and the County Legislature, the Erie County Sheriff's Office (ECSO) agreed to adopt a body-worn camera program inside its jails. To date, the ECSO has implemented the use of body-worn cameras inside the Erie County Correctional Facility and is in process of implementing body-worn cameras inside the Erie County Holding Center.

Further, in a recent Buffalo News article, dated 7/21/2022, using body-worn cameras, Buffalo police officers recorded video of a New York State Department of Corrections (NYS DOCCS) parole officer, "planting evidence in a gun and drug case and lying about it." According to the article, the parole officer in question knowingly planted evidence against a person under his supervision, which if convicted would have required the formally incarcerated person to have faced a sentence of seven to 15 years in prison. The article further states that the parole officer "admitted on the witness stand that he wouldn't have planted the evidence if he knew he was being recorded by a Buffalo police officer's body-worn camera." Given the overall success of body-worn camera

programs used by other locals in our community, as well as their direct contact with the public, the ECCSAB would like to request consideration of a body-worn camera program for the Erie County Probation Department.

The Erie County Corrections Specialist Advisory Board requests that the Erie County Legislature Public Safety Committee call on the Erie County Probation Department to appear and discuss the potential implementation of body cameras for probation officers working within the Erie County Probation Department.

Sincerely,

**Cindi McEachon, Chair
Erie County Corrections Specialist Advisory Board**

Cc: Erie County Legislature
Erie County Probation Department