

Restore Police Camera Transparency

The Peace Booth is concerned about the lack of trust between communities of color and the police departments that serve them. On the whole, the use of body cameras and dash cams can be a “win-win” for both law enforcement and for communities: they can serve to promote transparency and increase accountability while protecting officers from frivolous accusations or litigations.

But with this new technology, appropriate ways of handling the footage are essential. In situations where there is alleged misconduct, quick access to recordings becomes a matter of public interest. Under HB 972, public access to footage in matters of public interest is not guaranteed, which may increase the perception that law enforcement could withhold damning evidence. This erodes the trust between police and communities and weakens everyone’s capacity for peace.

In addition to sound policies which promote accountability and trust by promising release of footage in matters of public interest, law enforcement agencies should actively try to gain the trust of the community by hosting conversations, inviting citizen input, and given citizens direct say in officer conduct adjudications.

Additionally, statewide policies around the release of police videos should aid transparency, not hinder it. The repeal of HB 972 would be a strong step towards repairing fractured relationships between police and communities, and increase accountability and transparency statewide.

“Although it is not necessary to release every interaction that an officer has with a member of the public, when the interaction depicts a matter of public interest, it implicates public trust and confidence in the law enforcement agency and law enforcement officer, and should be released for community inspection. “

-- ACLU statement on HB 972

https://www.acluofnorthcarolina.org/files/legislative/HB_972_updated_061416.pdf