



**Representative Hearcel F. Craig  
House District 26**

**Government Accountability and Oversight Committee  
House Bill 425 Sponsor Testimony  
Representatives Hearcel F. Craig and Niraj Antani  
January 10, 2018**

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Greenspan, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for providing us the opportunity to offer sponsor testimony on House Bill 425. I would also like to thank Representative Antani for his joint sponsorship of this legislation.

House Bill 425 will provide local law enforcement agencies with the standards they need to be transparent in their interactions with taxpayers, while protecting our fundamental right as Americans to be secure in our persons, houses, papers, and effects. In short, this legislation is about balance – the right balance of transparency and privacy.

As more and more communities throughout our state adopt body cameras in an effort to protect police officers and taxpayers, it has become clear there are many unanswered questions about what happens when the cameras stop rolling- and rightfully so.

Certainly, taxpayers have a right to know how officers and citizens interact with each other when tax dollars are used to record those interactions. Still, taxpayers and officers also have a reasonable right to privacy, especially when medical issues, victims of violent crime, and children are involved.

To that end, our legislation specifies situations that may be redacted from a body worn camera recording, such as death of a person or police officer or other first responder, grievous bodily harm, or an act of severe violence resulting in serious physical harm. In all of these instances, if the injury or death was caused by the police officer, the footage is considered public record.

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The bill also specifies that protected health information, information that could identify victims of domestic violence and sex offense, and information that is sensitive or confidential which could threaten or endanger a person's safety are considered restricted portions of the body camera recording.

Additionally, House Bill 425 allows a person to file an action in the Supreme Court to release all or portions of the recording if they want to see a portion of body camera footage that is deemed restricted by a public office. If the court decides that the public interest in the recording substantially outweighs privacy concerns, the court can order the public office to release the recording.

Ultimately, taxpayers and our police officers should feel safe and secure when an incident occurs or an emergency arises, and that security and safety should not stop when the cameras stop.

We owe it to our men and women in uniform and the taxpayers they protect and serve to have clear standards in place that preserve our constitutional right to privacy while ensuring the highest level of transparency and accountability.

After many meetings with law enforcement, medical professionals, legal experts and good government groups, I am proud to report to the committee that I believe we found that exact balance of privacy protections and public transparency in House Bill 425.

I want to offer my sincere thanks to Columbus Mayor Ginther and my partner in this effort Representative Antani for working together to draft such a thoughtful and thorough piece of legislation.

Chairman Blessing and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight, I thank you for allowing us to offer testimony, and I thank you for your consideration of House Bill 425.