



ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. JOSEPH C. LORIGO
10TH DISTRICT LEGISLATOR
MINORITY LEADER

Robert Keating
Budget Director
Division of Budget and Management
95 Franklin Street, 16th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

RE: Funding for Body Cameras

Dear Robert,

There has been much conversation locally and nationally relating to police officers wearing body cameras. As recently as March 14th, a discussion was held during a Public Safety Committee meeting of the Erie County Legislature with Erie County Sheriff Timothy Howard. During that conversation, Sheriff Howard indicated a willingness to institute body cameras for his road patrol deputies, but said that there was no funding available.

Body cameras are becoming increasingly widespread throughout the country and New York State. They allow for both the audio and video documentation of police interactions with the public to the benefit of all parties involved. Any doubts about police conduct or the interaction of an officer and civilian can be quickly and easily reviewed. The body cameras will also provide vital readily accessible evidence for court cases, officer complaints, and training seminars. Unfortunately, long term data storage is a significant financial burden that must be addressed before any body camera system can be implemented.

As you are aware, the Legislature is the fiscal house of Erie County government. If we are seriously to consider equipping the Sheriff's Office with body cameras, the Legislature must make funding that endeavor a priority. To date, that has not been the case as we spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a number of other projects, causes, programs, and state mandates.

Historically, the Administration has come to the Legislature seeking funding for additional jobs, programs, and projects over the past several years. Each time that is the case, the Budget Office indicates that we have found the money through some saving in another departmental budget line or, as so often has been the case recently, Medicaid savings. Quite frankly, it appears your office always "finds" money for the Administration's requests.

The Legislature has continued this ongoing conversation exclusively with the Sheriff's Office and has failed to request a report from your office regarding the financial obstacles of this project. If the Legislature is ever seriously to consider action to equip our officers with body cameras, rather than simply hosting discussions and pointing fingers, we must consider the obstacle mentioned by the Sheriff: lack of funding.

The Sheriff's Office has estimated that body cameras will cost approximately \$1.3 million annually. Please advise where in the budget we can find funding to cover this cost. Both the Sheriff and members of the Legislature have expressed the desire to move forward with body cameras if funding is available. Your office knows the Erie County budget better than most, and with your help, we can make funding body cameras a top priority.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you would like to discuss possible funding sources, please contact me at any time. Alternatively, I look forward to receiving a report outlining where in the budget the Legislature might find additional funding sources for this body camera initiative.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joseph C. Lorigo".

JOSEPH C. LORIGO

Erie County Legislature Minority Leader