From: Debra Rogers
To: Body-Worn Camera Feasibility Review Committee
Subject: Bodycam committee report, recommendations etc.
Date: Monday, December 21, 2020 6:34:26 PM

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

I've followed the process of this committee with interest since it began. In a complicated environment with a pandemic, after a half-year of urgent Black Lives Matter protests here in Madison, the PFC and its unknown influencers have chosen a new chief who seems to want no significant change in the police department. Instead, he will most likely seek to implement a high-tech surveillance state to concentrate policing on areas of predicted crime. I am stripped of hope for police reform in Madison.

But this brings the work of the bodycam committee into prominence. The community (and Common Council) are counting on you to produce a report with conclusions and recommendations that reflect the real, costly consequences of giving police bodycams. You know they want them; they expect to control the release, the editing, and the use of bodycam footage, and use it to their advantage. I would argue that it has been the ubiquitous camera phone, capturing video that is timely and, most importantly, not in the hands of the police, that has shown white Americans how police treat people of color. Shocking, brutal, inexcusable abuse of power shows up everywhere in this footage, and now we've finally seen it.

Michael Gennaco from OIR talked to your committee about the complexities involved in trying to mitigate the potential for abuse by police of bodycam footage. He emphasized that police tend to use it to intimidate witnesses or accused people by claiming they have clear footage, but withholding access to it so that defense attorneys and the accused have not yet seen it. He acknowledged the benefits that can come from having bodycam footage, but said that in practice, there's a serious risk that it will result in further criminalization and increased arrests of already "overpoliced" communities for more petty offenses. From the testimony of various presenters, it became clear that people tend to have assumptions about bodycams that prove to be false in practice, because they were based on incorrect assumptions, and that they do not solve the problems that people often expect them to. And in some ways, they can clearly make community conflicts worse.

It looks like this committee's report could be influential; I hope you will take the time and the care to make it both complete and accurate.

Sincerely,

Deb Rogers RN
Jenifer Street, Madison