From: Andrea Richardson
To: Body-Worn Camera Feasibility Review Committee
Subject: Body-Worn Camera Feasibility Review
Date: Monday, December 21, 2020 4:45:54 PM

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Dear Members of the Body-Worn Camera Feasibility Review Committee:

First of all, thank you for your many, many hours of public service to analyze this important issue. Perhaps like many of you, years ago I supported the use of body-worn cameras as a tool for police accountability and protection of civilians. Now, I am very concerned about the data that shows BWCs can actually be used for the opposite effect, leading to increased criminalization of communities of color and providing footage that biases viewers against civilians and in favor of police use of force. The documents that you are reviewing reveal these and additional significant problems with BWCs.

We all know that systemic racism permeates every aspect of the criminal punishment system (see Harvard Study Shows Systemic Racism in Massachusetts Criminal Justice System (theroot.com)). I urge you to take every possible measure to ensure that your review and proposals are based in anti-racism and designed to ensure fair and just treatment of everyone in the Madison community. It is imperative that we learn from other communities that have used BWCs. If we knowingly take steps that perpetuate and increase criminalization and incarceration of communities of color, we are perpetuating the same racism systems that have been part of our country since its founding: slavery, Jim Crow, segregation and exploitation.

It is far past time to drastically change how we approach safety and security in our community. Please use the power you have in your committee to make sure your proposals take us in the right direction.

Thank you,

Andrea Richardson