

**From:** [Evelyn Gildrie-Voyles](#)  
**To:** [Equal Opportunities Commission](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to Agenda Item 2: the Body Worn Cameras Committee's report  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 10, 2021 8:14:51 PM

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Dear Members of the Equal Opportunities Commission

I am writing to you in opposition of purchasing and implementing a body worn camera system at the Madison Police Department. Such a system will be very expensive to run and maintain. The funds that would be needed to purchase and implement body worn cameras would be better spent creating alternatives to sending police for mental health, homelessness, drug or alcohol related incidents.

I understand that it is tempting to see body cameras as a technological fix to the problem of holding police accountable for their actions but there is no technological fix to a system that prioritizes punishment and control over addressing the root cause of problematic behavior and personal crises.

Body Cameras will not stop police from being called to emergency for which they are not trained or equipped. Please invest in communities and a first response system that does not send armed officers to every situation whether they are warranted or not.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter.

With Gratitude,  
Evelyn Gildrie-Voyles  
202 Farley Avenue  
Madison, WI 53705

**From:** [Gisela Wilson](#)  
**To:** [Equal Opportunities Commission](#)  
**Subject:** Comment on Agenda Item #2 - Body Worn Camera Feasibility Report  
**Date:** Thursday, March 11, 2021 9:42:15 AM

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[eoc@cityofmadison.com](mailto:eoc@cityofmadison.com)

March 11, 2021

Dear Members of the Equal Opportunities Commission,

I am writing today to indicate my stance on body worn cameras (BWCs) and the Body Worn Camera Feasibility Committee Report. I listened to and spoke at several of Body Worn Camera (BWC) Feasibility Committee meetings and have done a fair amount of background reading on BWCs and other forms of surveillance and compared the conclusions of that research to ongoing examples.

Regarding the Report:

While I approve of the aim of producing a short and understandable report, such a report should be based on, not wishful thinking, but rather the most recent independent research findings and examples — these would overwhelmingly result in a rejection of BWCs. That is not the Report you have in front of you. While the Report mentions the pros and cons of BWCs, it is biased against the most current research and many current case examples demonstrating that BWCs do little to mitigate the bias within police departments, our judicial system and the predominately white privileged public eye, not to mention the qualified immunity and strong Union representation police officers currently hold.

The Report also contains several recommendations in hopes of mitigating the proven bias of BWCs. However, these recommendations do not get rid of the expense of a BWC program — several police departments are abandoning their BWC programs due to their expense and a negligible increase in accountability. Further, implementation of mitigatory recommendations to their full extent is not guaranteed. In other words, the recommendations themselves are wishful thinking.

Regarding BWCs:

I am strongly against Madison incorporating BWCs into MPD usage.

Although many hoped BWCs would offer a measure of police accountability, in practice, five factors work against this aim.

First, BCW footage is selective in its perspective. They are a tool of surveillance. Officers can justify their behavior based on a perspective that includes only the victim or suspect's response and, importantly, not the stimuli or behavior that elicited the response. Even the simple fact of how the cameras are worn by officers while they are in motion would cause a disoriented (jumbled) view of a compliant victim/suspect.

Second, police have qualified immunity both in the courts and in the commonly held views of a majority white public. If, or once, released the public won't typically have had instruction to understand the perspective issue. Until there are adequate legal measures to hold police accountable, BWCs are a fool's errand. There are countless examples of camera footage failing to hold officers to account: George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Anjanette Young, Daniel Prude, and the 9 year old girl in Rochester NY who was pepper sprayed even while in handcuffs). None of these examples were examples of de-escalation in spite of camera usage.

On the matter of release of footage: it is rare that police departments release all available footage of an incident (e.g., Anjanette Young's case in Chicago is a prime example of selective release of BWC

footage<sup>1</sup>). Selectivity in the footage released provides another entry point for bias in favor of the police. Officers also have used BWC footage to selectively tailor their reports. In addition, many judges don't look at BWC footage until later stages of a trial.

Third, data examining the results of BWCs already in use show that body cam use actually has resulted in an increase in arrests for petty crime, not an increase in police accountability that was their aim. This will exacerbate, rather than mitigate, racial disparities in our criminal justice system. Since Dane County has one of the most racist disparities in incarceration in this county (16 fold vs 3-fold elsewhere<sup>2</sup>), the likelihood BWCs will increase, rather than decrease, criminalization is undeniable.

Fourth, I have read about numerous examples when officers simply turned BWCs off, something that has also been observed for dash cams, although at least dash cams give a broader perspective.

Fifth, due their extraordinary expense in both time and money, several police departments are ending their BWC programs. The cost of the cameras, data storage, and viewing-processing personnel time has been found to result in an 8-10% increase in police department budgets.

In summary, the costs of a BWC program would be much more productively invested in redirecting mental health and substance abuse calls to a more appropriate agency. In Madison, incidents involving mental health and substance abuse have been one area in which the MPD has performed below acceptable standards given their lack of appropriate training and the tendency of police officers to escalate rather than de-escalate a situation. Best practices across the country are veering towards abandoning the high cost endeavor of BWCs.

Sincerely,

Gisela F Wilson, PhD  
1244 Morrison Ct  
Madison, WI 53703

<sup>1</sup> "Young was denied a Freedom of Information Act request to the city for footage of the incident last year. She later obtained it through a lawsuit with the city. However, Lightfoot's administration recently admitted that it did not give Young's attorney all of the body camera footage." <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/12/20/chicagos-top-attorney-resigns-in-fallout-over-botched-raid>; <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/21/948693675/chicagos-top-attorney-resigns-following-scandal-over-botched-police-raid>; <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/12/16/anjanette-young-chicago/>; <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/chicago-mayor-says-attempt-block-video-raid-anjanette-young-s-n1251756>

**Figure 2. Jail Incarceration Rates by Race/Ethnicity  
Dane County vs. U.S.**

