

Rep. Taylor: Assembly Republicans advance bill to deny public access to body camera footage

Posted on Thursday, Nov 9, 2017

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MADISON – Today, Assembly Republicans voted to approve Assembly Bill 351, regarding law enforcement use of body cameras. This bill does little in setting reasonable standards or protecting legitimate privacy interests. Instead, it leaves most body camera standards to local law enforcement. The few standards in the bill will take the state backwards. Instead of more accountability and transparency in law enforcement interactions, this bill will block a substantial amount of critical body camera footage from public view. Rep. Chris Taylor (D-Madison), who has worked extensively on issues posed by body cameras, issued the following statement:

“Though I recognize the need for consistent, state-wide standards for the use of body cameras by law enforcement, this is a very damaging bill that takes our state backwards. This bill significantly guts the public’s and law enforcements’ interest in accountability and transparency in law enforcement interactions that body camera footage can illuminate. As a result, the public will be kept in the dark about some critical policing incidents involving when weapons are drawn or physical force is used, or when there are allegations of illegal searches or civil rights violations. Questions that could easily be answered about law enforcement interactions with the public, that in most cases will exonerate law enforcement, will be kept from the public and result in further exacerbating divisions between certain communities and law enforcement.

“While other states are moving towards more transparency in these interactions, Wisconsin Republicans have once again voted to keep the public in the dark. Whether it’s body camera footage, the \$3 billion cash giveaway to Foxconn, pollution permits, or redistricting, it’s clear Wisconsin Republicans aren’t prioritizing the people of our state.”