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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

August 28, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr:

I write to request that Memphis, Tennessee be included in the body-worn camera pilot program for deputized law enforcement officers. Earlier this year week, a Memphis teenager was shot by U.S. Marshals after being mistaken for a murder suspect. Communities across our country are suffering from a crisis of confidence in our law enforcement. These types of incidents are an important cause of that distrust. One simple way to help rebuild that confidence is to use body and dash cameras to create objective records of interactions with police.

I am the sponsor of the *Police CAMERA Act* (H.R. 120) which would provide equipment and training grants to state and local enforcement agencies for body-worn cameras. Similarly, I am a cosponsor of *Federal Police Camera and Accountability Act of 2019* (H.R. 3364) which would require body and dashboard cameras for federal uniformed agents. Both bills were incorporated in the *George Floyd Justice in Policing Act* (H.R. 7120) that was approved by the House of Representatives with a bipartisan majority.

Cameras alone cannot fix all the issues in American policing. However, their use could make a meaningful difference. The recordings protect both police and federal agents, as well as the general public. For our officers and agents, the cameras can prove they acted reasonably and in accordance with their training and agency policies. Should that not be the case, the cameras protect the public by documenting officer or agent misconduct. The cameras would also capture important evidence. For example, in the case in Memphis this week, the teenager who was shot by U.S. Marshals was subsequently arrested for ramming the vehicle, which was apparently stolen, into others. With body and dashboard cameras, all of this would have been recorded.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

SUBCOMMITTEES:

CHAIR – CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS AND
CIVIL LIBERTIES
COURTS, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, AND THE
INTERNET
CRIME, TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEES:

AVIATION
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT
RAILROADS, PIPELINES AND HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE
AND TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEES:

INVESTIGATIONS AND OVERSIGHT
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE (U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

The inclusion of Memphis in this program is particularly important because Memphis is an Operation LeGend city. The increased federal resources and agents must be deployed in a manner that helps restore confidence between the community and the law enforcement agencies sworn to protect and serve that community equally.

I look forward to this body camera pilot program expanding to include Memphis. If you have any questions, please contact Jared Feldman in my office. He can be reached at jared.feldman@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Cohen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Cohen" clearly distinguishable.

Steve Cohen
MEMBER OF CONGRESS