



UNFUNDED MANDATES:

# **The Hidden Costs of Body Camera Compliance for Local Law Enforcement**

*March 2025*



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## About the Authors



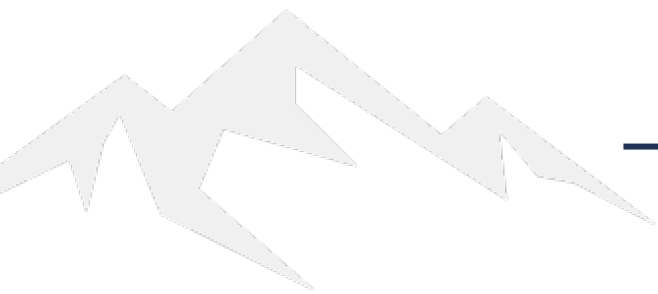
*Rose Pugliese*

Representative Pugliese, a two-term Mesa County Commissioner, is celebrated for her significant contributions to enhancing government transparency and fostering bipartisan cooperation. Her dedication extends to crucial areas such as family affairs, fostering affordability and attainability, and safeguarding parental rights and choice. As a first-generation American, she proudly holds a juris doctorate degree. In addition to the rewarding role of being a single mother to two children, she remains steadfast in her commitment to her community and constituents. Rep. Pugliese is the Colorado House Minority Leader and is the Advance Colorado Fellow in Local Government.



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Michael Tsogt is a Policy Analyst at the Advance Colorado Institute. His areas of policy and research include education, budget/fiscal matters, and public safety. He has testified on a range of bills at the State Capitol, including a bill proposing education savings accounts for special needs and foster care kids in Colorado. During undergrad, Michael was elected as the Academic Senator for student government, covered sports and entertainment for the student newspaper, and participated in several political fellowships and opportunities, including at the Center for the Study of Government and the Individual, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Michael graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in political science. He and his wife live in Colorado Springs.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local governments have many obligations to their constituents, which aligns with the proper role of government. Public safety should be a priority for every community throughout Colorado.

When the legislature puts additional burdens on law enforcement agencies, but does not accompany it with funding to properly implement these new laws, the local government must take its limited funding and re-appropriate it to cover the costs of the unfunded mandates. Even if the new mandate is based on good policy, the lack of funding often makes the mandate – or other necessary services the local government is responsible for – unsustainable.

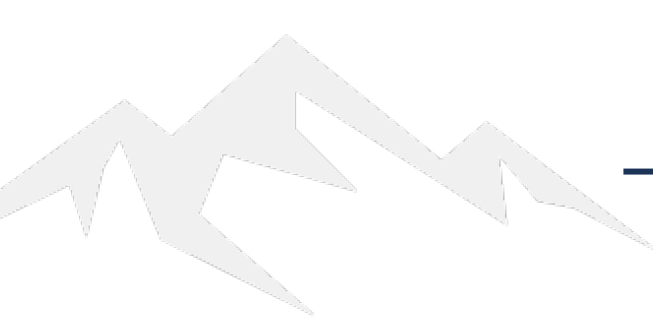
In this report, we will examine one of those unfunded mandates: body cameras.

### *What Are Unfunded Mandates?*

Unfunded mandates – legal requirements pushed from the state to local governments without the funds to pay for the requirements – are a matter of growing concern in Colorado. According to the Colorado Municipal League’s (CML) *2024 State of Our Towns and Cities Report*, “municipalities across Colorado are currently facing the challenging fiscal consequences of various unfunded state mandates,” and “a state law that generally prohibits the practice (C.R.S. § 29-1-304.5) lacks adequate recognition, meaning state laws or regulations often result in municipalities taking prescribed actions to achieve state policy goals without any reimbursement for the city or town from the state that the law otherwise requires.” (1)

C.R.S. § 29-1-304.5, the Colorado law that deals with prohibitions and exceptions on state mandates by the general assembly to local governments, reads as follows:

No new state mandate or an increase in the level of service for an existing state mandate beyond the existing level of service required by law shall be mandated by the general assembly or any state agency on any local government unless the state provides additional moneys to reimburse such local government for the costs of such new state



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mandate or such increased level of service. In the event that such additional moneys for reimbursement are not provided, such mandate or increased level of service for an existing state mandate shall be optional on the part of the local government. (2)

Despite this law, the state legislature has continued to push its preferred policies down on local governments without adequate funding. At times, the state will cover funding initially – perhaps for the first year – or partially, by funding one particular aspect of the new requirement. But all too often, the state leaves local governments to fend for themselves and find new funding sources on their own. Law enforcement “reform” is one area that has left local governments struggling to fund the state’s mandates. The legislature seems to have forgotten current statutes that require the state to fund its own mandates.

### *The Bills in Question: Senate Bill 20-217 and House Bill 21-1250*

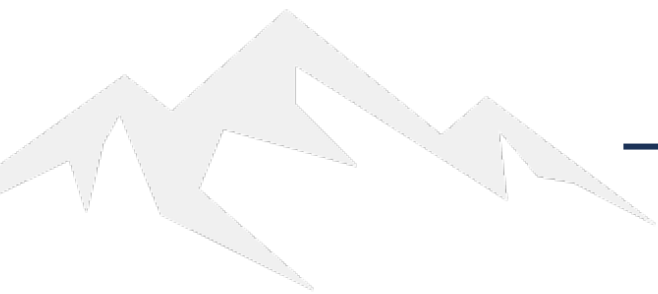
Senate Bill 20-217, titled “Enhance Law Enforcement Integrity,” was passed by the state legislature in June 2020. It required local law enforcement agencies and the Colorado State Patrol to issue body cameras to their officers, with some exceptions. (3)

According to the official bill summary, the bill “requires local law enforcement and the Colorado State Patrol to use body-worn cameras and release recordings to the public, and to conduct data reporting about certain incidents and contacts with the public,” with full compliance by 2023. (4)

According to Colorado Politics, the bill was announced after six straight days of protests in Denver after the death of George Floyd. (5) Colorado Public Radio noted that the passage of this bill placed Colorado as one of the first states in the country to “tackle wholesale, statewide police accountability reform in the wake of George Floyd’s death...” (6)

House Bill 21-1250 was passed the following year, and it built upon the requirements passed in SB20-217. Titled “Measures To Address Law Enforcement Accountability, the bill “allows for a civil suit to be filed against Colorado State Patrol officers; requires multi-agency review of officer-involved





civilian deaths; creates the no-knock and forced entry study group; requires a study of best practices in policing, and makes other adjustments to provisions of SB 20-217.” (7)

According to Colorado Newsline, “The new law expands the circumstances in which officers must turn on their body cameras and opens up the Colorado State Patrol to more potential lawsuits over officer misconduct, in the same way last year’s bill added civil liability for local law enforcement agencies.” (8)

The Denver Post highlighted that the bill “requires police to release requested body camera footage that’s unredacted (with few exceptions) within 21 days in cases where someone has complained of officer misconduct.” (9)

### *The Costs of SB 20-217 and HB 21-1250*

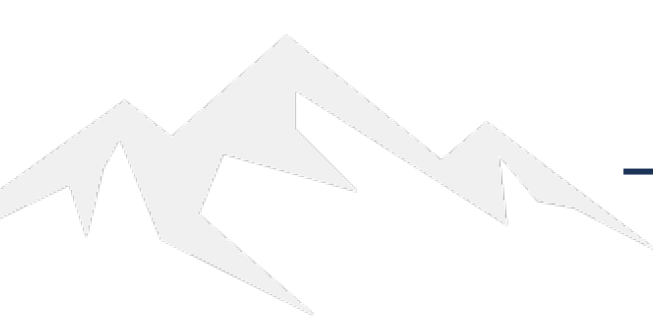
Under SB 20-217, the state acknowledges the bill’s increases in workload and costs for local governments, which include “body-worn camera equipment and video data storage; staff and software to manage video collection, processing, and public distribution; staff and software for data collection and reporting; policy updates and training; and potential payments for judgements and attorney fees in civil actions alleging violations of constitutional rights.” (4)

**Table 2**  
**Expenditures Under SB 20-217**

| Cost Components                          | FY 2020-21       | FY 2021-22         | FY 2022-23         | FY 2023-24         |
|--|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Colorado State Patrol, DPS</b>        |                  |                    |                    |                    |
| Personal Services                        | \$50,288         | \$100,576          | \$216,090          | \$216,090          |
| Operating/Capital Outlay                 | \$7,550          | \$8,900            | \$17,800           | \$5,400            |
| Legal Services                           | \$95,940         | \$95,940           | -                  | -                  |
| Body-worn Cameras/Contract               | \$395,700        | \$1,465,080        | \$1,872,060        | \$933,660          |
| <i>Camera Issuance</i>                   | 100              | 340                | 340                | -                  |
| Information Technology                   | \$68,000         | \$50,000           | \$125,000          | \$200,000          |
| Centrally Appropriated Costs*            | \$85,882         | \$227,117          | \$317,641          | \$217,800          |
| FTE – Personal Services                  | 1.0 FTE          | 2.0 FTE            | 4.0 FTE            | 4.0 FTE            |
| FTE – Legal Services                     | 0.5 FTE          | 0.5 FTE            | -                  | -                  |
| <b>CSP (Subtotal) - HUTF</b>             | <b>\$703,360</b> | <b>\$1,947,613</b> | <b>\$2,548,591</b> | <b>\$1,572,950</b> |
| <b>Division of Criminal Justice, DPS</b> |                  |                    |                    |                    |
| Personal Services                        | -                | \$164,590          | \$179,553          | \$179,553          |
| Operating/Capital Outlay                 | -                | \$15,100           | \$2,700            | \$2,700            |
| Computer Programming                     | -                | \$400,000          | \$35,000           | \$35,000           |
| Centrally Appropriated Costs*            | -                | \$100,672          | \$62,896           | \$62,896           |
| FTE – Personal Services                  | -                | 1.8 FTE            | 2.0 FTE            | 2.0 FTE            |
| <b>DCJ (Subtotal) - General Fund</b>     | <b>\$0</b>       | <b>\$680,362</b>   | <b>\$280,149</b>   | <b>\$280,149</b>   |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>\$703,360</b> | <b>\$2,627,975</b> | <b>\$2,828,740</b> | <b>\$1,853,099</b> |
| <b>Total FTE</b>                         | <b>1.5 FTE</b>   | <b>4.3 FTE</b>     | <b>6.0 FTE</b>     | <b>6.0 FTE</b>     |

\* Centrally appropriated costs are not included in the bill's appropriation.

(4)



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Major reforms to policing are never without cost, especially for local law enforcement agencies.

SB20-217's fiscal note mentions that for the body-worn cameras requirement, agencies that require 1,000 or more cameras will incur costs that exceed \$3 million per year on an ongoing basis. (4)

While SB20-217 outlines significant costs that local governments will bear, the fiscal note does not show any positive state appropriations to local governments to pay for these mandates. The bill only appropriates monies for the Colorado State Patrol and the Division of Criminal Justice, both state agencies in the Department of Public Safety. (4)

SB20-217's fiscal note acknowledges the increase in costs to local governments but does not provide the funds necessary to reimburse or offset these costs.

House Bill 21-1250 also requires significant increases in costs to local governments.

In compliance with HB 21-1250, local governments should be expected to provide the following:

“Costs and workload will increase for local law enforcement agencies to conduct investigations into all officer-involved civilian deaths. Local government agencies involved in Critical Incident Response Teams include police departments, sheriff's offices, and district attorney's offices. Workload includes investigating, evaluating, and reviewing any incident where injury or death occurred. District attorney's offices are also required to write and release a written report explaining the district attorney's findings when no charges are being brought against the officer. In addition, the bill will increase workload and potential costs for local law enforcement agencies to create policies and procedures to allow media access where radios are currently encrypted.” (10)

According to HB 21-1250's fiscal note, the bill appropriates \$2 million from the General Fund to the Body-Worn Camera Fund to make grants to help pay for administrative costs. This \$2 million is the only guaranteed positive allocation of state funds to local governments to pay for or offset these costs. (10)

Local governments, as shown in the next section, have ultimately ended up footing the bill for these state-imposed mandates from Senate Bill 20-217 and House Bill 21-1250.

**Table 2**  
**Expenditures Under HB 21-1250 (Cont.)**

| <b>Cost Components</b>                        | <b>FY 2021-22</b>  | <b>FY 2022-23</b>  |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Colorado Bureau of Investigation (DPS)</b> |                    |                    |
| Personal Services                             | \$702,911          | \$758,529          |
| Operating Expenses                            | \$8,100            | \$8,100            |
| Capital Outlay Costs                          | \$37,200           | -                  |
| Vehicle Lease and Mileage Costs               | \$62,061           | \$62,061           |
| Training Costs                                | \$36,000           | \$36,000           |
| Field Agent and Crime Scene Equipment         | \$219,176          | -                  |
| Leased Space                                  | \$36,300           | \$39,600           |
| Centrally Appropriated Costs <sup>2</sup>     | \$274,869          | \$225,596          |
| FTE – Personal Services                       | 5.5 FTE            | 6.0 FTE            |
| <b>CBI Subtotal</b>                           | <b>\$1,376,617</b> | <b>\$1,129,886</b> |
| <b>Body-Worn Camera Fund (DPS)</b>            |                    |                    |
| Grants  | \$2,000,000        | -                  |
| <b>BWC Subtotal</b>                           | <b>\$2,000,000</b> | <b>-</b>           |
| <b>Department of Local Affairs</b>            |                    |                    |
| Contract                                      | \$250,000          | -                  |
| <b>DOLA Subtotal</b>                          | <b>\$250,000</b>   | <b>-</b>           |
| <b>Total</b>                                  | <b>\$7,424,429</b> | <b>\$4,970,359</b> |
| <b>Total FTE</b>                              | <b>16.5 FTE</b>    | <b>17.0 FTE</b>    |

<sup>1</sup> First-year legal and settlement costs will be paid using available funds in the Risk Management Fund in the Department of Personnel and Administration. For FY 2022-23 and future years, these costs will be paid by the Department of Public Safety with Highway Users Tax Fund (HUTF) and General Fund money through common policy assessments based on actual legal and settlement costs incurred.

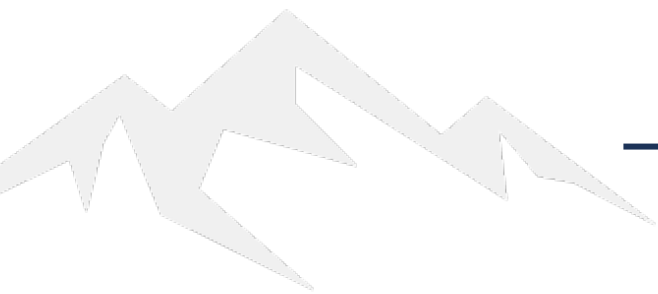
<sup>2</sup> Centrally appropriated costs are not included in the bill's appropriation.

(10)

## *How Much Have Local Governments Paid?*

The Colorado Municipal League reported that “while many agencies had implemented body-worn camera programs before 2020, responding cities and towns reported that compliance with SB 20-217 and HB 21-1110 has cost between \$17,000 and \$2.3 million annually.” (1)

The Weld County Sheriff's Office had begun to implement body-worn cameras in 2019. In 2020 and 2021, before compliance with the two bills, the body-worn camera contract (includes cameras and storage), technicians, software, and training and other operating costs ran the department a total of \$130,233 and \$145,377 for their respective years. (11)



In compliance with SB20-217 and HB21-1250 in years 2022, 2023, and 2024, those same line-item costs totaled the department \$577,901, \$735,156, and \$755,867 for their respective years. (11)

Weld County, reportedly, is working on a new contract with a different provider, which will cost them right under \$1 million in the first year and will total \$1.3 million by the 10<sup>th</sup> year. (11)

|   | 2020   | 2021   | 2022    | 2023    | 2024    | Total     |
|---|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|
| <b>Contract</b>                             | 91,800 | 91,800 | 291,800 | 403,542 | 403,542 | 1,282,484 |
| <b>BWC techs (x3)</b>                       |        |        | 172,312 | 228,852 | 241,365 | 642,529   |
| <b>Software</b>                             | 3,383  | 3,383  | 11,844  | 18,990  | 22,320  | 59,920    |
| <b>Training &amp; other operating costs</b> | 35,050 | 50,194 | 101,945 | 83,772  | 88,640  | 359,601   |
| <b>Total</b>                                |        |        |         |         |         | 2,344,534 |

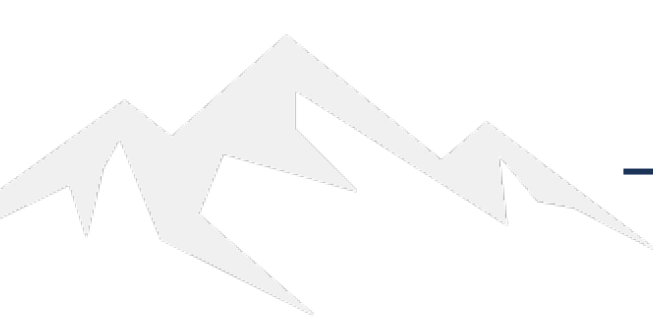
Weld County was able to offset the initial rollout costs of the body-worn cameras program with a grant from the 2020-2021 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant for \$200,00. (11)

According to the Sheriff's Office, Weld County, to date, has not received any monies appropriated from either SB20-217 or HB21-1250, including the Body Worn Camera Fund. (11)

For other counties, such as Arapahoe County, compliance demanded significant increases in hiring.

Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office reported that the first year of compliance with Senate Bill 20-217, which began in July 2023, will cost them \$2.5 million. Over \$1 million of that was to fund the 17 new employees to meet compliance. (12)

Data storage costs and other operational costs were consistently projected to be the costliest expenses for local law enforcement agencies to bear. The Park



County Sheriff's Office needed \$500,000 to cover the costs of compliance with these mandates. (13)

Park County reportedly was awarded a grant of \$64,195 to cover the cost of 35 body cameras – not nearly enough to offset the costs of compliance. (13)

While local law enforcement agencies across the state received grant monies, it was primarily to pay for the initial cost of purchasing the number of requested body cameras, which were relatively inexpensive compared to data storage costs.) (13)

SB20-217 requires that routine body-worn camera footage is stored for a minimum of 30 days. This is the baseline unless there is a complaint, investigation, or a policy that extends it. (3)

For evidentiary footage, which are recordings related to incidents such as use of force, bodily injury, death, or other legal proceedings, the storage requirements are the following: 3 years for evidence tied to misdemeanors or other minor cases; 7 years for felonies or other more serious incidents; and permanently for officer-involved deaths, major misconduct cases, or other unresolved litigation. (3)

These requirements have created significant ongoing storage costs, and these costs grow every year due to the volume of recorded footage that must be stored.

Smaller law enforcement agencies have also felt the financial burdens of these mandates.

Lone Tree Police Department related to the Colorado Municipal League that its department has had body-worn cameras for over a decade before SB20-217. However, after the passage of the bills and its requirements for extensive reporting of citizen contact data to the Colorado Department of Law, which is mandated by both bills, compliance now costs the municipality \$80,000 annually – a hefty bill for their small department. (14)





## *Conclusion*

While it is important to have body cameras to protect both the public and our law enforcement agencies, there is a cost associated with these body cameras.

There is consistent conversation at the legislature about prioritizing funding for the state while at the same time, the legislature passes legislation that results in undue financial burdens on local governments. This puts local governments in the difficult position of having to make tough choices and cuts to necessary local services in order to fund the increasing obligations put on them by the legislature.

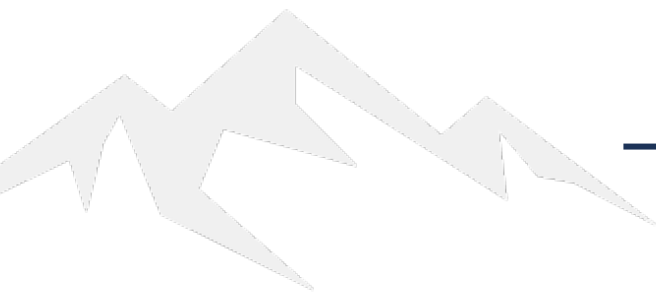
It is incumbent on the state government to take into account the fiscal implications of legislation on local governments – not only on the state itself – before continuing to pass down unfunded mandates on local law enforcement agencies.



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