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**Public Defender Discloses Video Evidence of Officers Planting Drugs; Demands Swift
Action by Prosecutors and Thorough Review by Police**

For immediate release – July 19, 2017.

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The Office of the Public Defender is concerned that Baltimore City prosecutors persist in pursuing cases involving officers depicted in body camera video footage planting drugs that resulted in a criminal arrest.

The body camera video shows three officers – one hiding and then “finding” what appears to be drugs while two other officers look on and take no action. An Assistant Public Defender, who represented the person charged with the planted drugs, forwarded the video to the State’s Attorney’s Office last week.

The officers involved are still witnesses in other active cases that are currently being pursued for prosecution in Baltimore City Circuit Court. The officer whose camera shows him planting the drugs, Officer Richard Pinheiro, is a witness in approximately 53 active cases. The prosecutor claimed to be “appalled” by the video and dropped the charges in that case, but no clear policy has been taken in other cases involving these officers. Officer Pinheiro was called to testify in another case the following week without any disclosure of this videotape.

“Officer misconduct has been a pervasive issue at the Baltimore Police Department, which is exacerbated by the lack of accountability.” said Debbie Katz Levi, head of the Baltimore Public Defender’s Special Litigation Section. “We have long supported the use of police body cameras to help identify police misconduct, but such footage is meaningless if prosecutors continue to rely on these officers, especially if they do so without disclosing their bad acts.”

Notably, the video footage has no sound for the portion showing when the evidence was planted, suggesting that it was turned on shortly afterwards. “Body cameras have an important role to play in the oversight and accountability of police officers but only if they are used properly and the footage is taken seriously,” said Levi. “Officers should not be able to decide when to turn the cameras on and off, and footage like what was presented here needs to result in immediate action by the State’s Attorney and the Police Department.”

The video footage is available at:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/opi1nq800bfw636/Pinheiro%2C%20Richard_8170110147_2200_Eagle_St_Cds_Arrest.mp4?dl=0

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