



TECHNET
THE VOICE OF THE
INNOVATION ECONOMY

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April 28, 2021

The Honorable Mark Conway
Chair, Public Safety and Government Operations Committee
Baltimore City Council
Du Burns Council Chamber, 4th floor, City Hall
Baltimore, MD 21202

RE: Baltimore City Council Bill 21-0001 Banning the Use of Facial Recognition Technology

Dear Chair Conway and members of the Committee:

TechNet is the national, bipartisan network of technology CEOs and senior executives that promotes the growth of the innovation economy by advocating a targeted policy agenda at the federal and 50-state level. Our diverse membership includes dynamic American businesses ranging from startups to the most iconic companies on the planet and represents over three and a half million employees and countless customers in the fields of information technology, e-commerce, the sharing and gig economies, advanced energy, cybersecurity, venture capital, and finance.

TechNet respectfully opposes the proposed ordinance prohibiting the use of facial recognition technology by city government as well as private entities in the city, including individuals and businesses.

While we strongly agree it is important to have effective oversight and accountability of these tools to uphold civil liberties, we disagree that a ban is the best option to move forward. We believe that this ordinance is too broad, and that outright bans on facial recognition systems lead to several unintended consequences which will deny companies the ability to improve the technology, and limit consumer access to beneficial emerging technologies and innovation.

Additionally, while the bill makes narrow exceptions for unlocking devices and security systems, it would ban beneficial uses of facial recognition technology like identity verification and fraud prevention.

We agree it is critical that there be transparency and oversight of how law enforcement uses facial recognition systems. We encourage you to continue to work with industry stakeholders who understand the technology to find solutions and compromises that will allow governmental entities to adopt and test this important technology with appropriate oversight. There are solutions to address concerns of facial recognition without placing a de facto ban on the technology.

Finally, we remain concerned at the speed in which the City is moving to ban this technology. This year Maryland considered numerous biometric and privacy related bills including a study on facial recognition technology. Congress is also currently considering legislation that would establish federal standards for the use of facial recognition and similar technologies. We encourage the city officials to take the time to work with the private sector, as other jurisdictions have, to develop regulations that can work for the entire community, and will not conflict with what will soon likely be new state or national requirements.

Thank you in advance for you for your consideration on these matters and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions. We look forward to continuing our engagement on this important issue.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director, Massachusetts and the Northeast
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