

# BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



## PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

*LO25-0042*

*AI Surveillance in Schools*

# Public Testimony

**To: Baltimore City Council**

**Subject: Opposition to AI Surveillance in Public Spaces (2-Minute Statement)**

Dear Council Members,

I am here to strongly oppose the proposed use of AI surveillance in Baltimore's public spaces. This technology is not only a waste of limited public funds—it actively risks harming the very communities it claims to protect.

We have already seen a troubling example in Baltimore County Public Schools, where an AI-based detection system reportedly mistook a Black student carrying a bag of chips for a gun. That false alert triggered a law-enforcement response to a harmless situation. This is not safety—this is over-policing, and it is disproportionately directed at Black students and people of color.

This incident highlights a much larger issue. AI surveillance systems are trained on biased data and often reinforce existing racial disparities. When deployed in public spaces, everyday behavior by Black and Brown residents is more likely to be flagged as suspicious, escalating routine moments into police encounters. That creates fear, trauma, and mistrust, not safety.

At the same time, these systems are extremely expensive. They require millions in upfront costs, ongoing software contracts, data storage, and cybersecurity, yet they do not prevent violence in real time. Cameras and algorithms cannot de-escalate conflicts, provide mental health support, or build trust in our neighborhoods.

Baltimore has far better uses for these funds—violence interruption programs, youth services, mental health care, housing stability, and well-staffed emergency response. These are solutions with proven results.

If AI surveillance cannot reliably protect students in a controlled school environment, there is no reason to believe it will succeed across an entire city. I urge the Council to reject this proposal and invest instead in community-based strategies that actually make Baltimore safer.

Thank you.

Dear Members of the Public Safety Committee,

My name is Benjamin H. Grimaldi, and I am the Legislative Affairs Director of the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City. Based on student viewpoints we have gathered, we support City Council Resolution L025-0042, with some reservations.

We believe that this has the potential to increase school safety, which students ranked as the 2nd most concerning issue to them in the ASCBC Issues Platform. Having AI surveillance in schools would help with identifying threats faster, which could be life saving. In the words of David Wrzesinski, a safety director at Robinson independent school district , “If you’re paying somebody \$30,000 a year just to sit and watch a camera, whatever performance level they had, and as sharp as they are, they’re never going to be able to focus consistently the way that artificial intelligence does.”

We do, however, have many concerns about such a system. We are concerned about the accuracy of such a system, particularly when the safety of students are at stake. Recently, in Baltimore County an AI security system misidentified a bag of chips as a gun. While this is likely an outlier, we are still concerned about it. According to a student at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute “Somebody could be hurt by an error that an AI System made, that is what I find concerning.” Therefore, we think there should be more stakeholder engagement with the system if it is implemented, particularly with students, to ensure it is run well. That said, we understand this is

a very early phase in the process, and that the suggestions above would likely be worked out later on in the process.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration,

Benjamin H. Grimaldi

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