

BaltAC

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cename, Budget Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4774		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 21-0001 – Surveillance Technology in Baltimore		

DATE:

TO

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400

February 23, 2021

Position: Does Not Oppose

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0001, Surveillance Technology in Baltimore, the purpose of which is to prohibit Baltimore City from purchasing or obtaining certain face surveillance technology and contracting or subcontracting with an entity using face surveillance technology. In addition, the bill prohibits any person in Baltimore City from obtaining, retaining, accessing, or using certain face surveillance technology or any information obtained from this technology.

Background

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) and Department of Transportation (DOT) currently utilize some systems that may fall under the definition in this legislation. BPD utilizes the Maryland Image Repository System (MIRS) as part of their investigation process. MIRS, which is maintained by the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, is facial recognition software that allows certified officers to compare images of unidentified suspects to State and FBI mugshots, as well as motor vehicle records. DOT utilizes a variety of automated cameras in their ATVES Division, which are used to enforce traffic laws related to speeding, red lights, and oversized commercial vehicles. Speed and red-light cameras have brought in \$15 million to \$20 million in General Fund annually, with approximately \$15.9 million in Fiscal 2018 and \$26.3 million in Fiscal 2019. In addition, DOT utilizes closed-circuit television cameras to monitor traffic.

In the past year, several municipalities have implemented some form of ban on surveillance technology, specifically facial recognition technology, including Minneapolis, San Francisco, Boston, and Oakland. Numerous studies have documented inaccuracies from facial recognition technology, particularly among certain groups such as women and people of color. Multiple cases of facial recognition misidentifications have led to wrongful police action, which have come to light in recent years. Additionally, surveillance technologies, including facial recognition, are often disproportionately deployed in Black and Brown communities.

Fiscal Impact

The Department of Finance does not anticipate a cost for the City as a result of this legislation.

Other Considerations

This legislation allows the City to reassess, and possibly renew, the prohibition every five years beginning December 31, 2022. This reassessment will be based on an assessment of studying changes in the technology, conducting public hearings, and other evidence, which will allow the City to end the prohibition should the technology become a more important and accurate tool.

In addition, the legislation requires the Director of Baltimore City Information and Technology to submit an annual report to the Mayor and City Council regarding the use of surveillance by the Mayor and City Council, which the Department of Finance Bureau of Procurement will assist with, as necessary.

Conclusion

This legislation will prohibit the City from purchasing, obtaining, retaining, accessing, or using certain face surveillance technology or contracting with an entity using face surveillance technology. The prohibition will be reviewed on a five-year basis, beginning December 2022, to assess the need for changes or renewals. There is no anticipated fiscal impact for this legislation.

For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance does not oppose City Council Bill 21-0001.

cc: Henry Raymond
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