

TO: Chair McCray and members of the Health, Environment and Technology Committee

FROM: Sonia Portnoy-Leemon

My name is Sonia Portnoy-Leemon. I am a resident of District 7. I am submitting this testimony on 23-0379: Facial Recognition Technology

I am an Early Childhood educator, working with children has been my life's work and passion, it is the base of my moral framework. This is the perspective I come from when I think about FRT in Baltimore. I've taught in Baltimore City Early Head Start and so when I think about who will be targeted by this harmful technology I know that it will be the children from my classroom and their families.

There is no facial recognition technology that exists that is not fundamentally racist. Human bias is always the foundation for these technologies. It does not keep people safe, it simply creates excuses to target people. Pouring money into destructive surveillance technology stops money from being used in ways that help our communities. I believe that the only acceptable and moral choice is a full ban of all FRT, but a bill to limit its use is a strong first step.

Countless studies show that FRT does nothing to make anyone safer. Facial recognition and other surveillance technologies will heighten discrimination in policing, especially as law enforcement agencies continue to make misinformed decisions around arrest and detainment that disproportionately impact populations who are already suffering. FRT and invasive surveillance technology have no place in Baltimore and we can start by limiting their use.