



February 22, 2021

Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Room 400
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

**RE: City Council Bill 21-0001
Surveillance Technology in Baltimore**

Dear Council President Mosby and Members of the City Council:

The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) has reviewed Council Bill 21-0001. It is the understanding of the Agency that this bill seeks to prohibit Baltimore City government from purchasing, obtaining, contracting, or subcontracting with another entity for certain face surveillance technology. The bill further seeks to prohibit any person in Baltimore City from obtaining, retaining, accessing, or using certain face surveillance technology. In the case where any information is obtained from certain face surveillance technology, the bill proposes a requirement that the Director of Baltimore City Information and Technology (BCIT) submit an annual report to the Mayor and City Council regarding the use of said surveillance by the Mayor and City Council. Finally, the bill provides for a certain termination date, certain penalties, and certain terms.

Agency Position: Support with Amendments

MONSE is responsible for the financial administration of the City's Closed-Circuit TV (CCTV) system, CitiWatch. CitiWatch is a collaborative effort that includes the Baltimore Police Department, Baltimore City Office of Information & Technology, and MONSE, as well as external stakeholders who help to maintain and expand the program. In Baltimore, this system is made up of over 800 CCTV cameras and has contributed to almost 1500 arrests between 2016 – 2020. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recognizes proactive monitoring of CCTV cameras as a national best practice. In fact, MONSE's sister agency in Washington, DC funds its CCTV systems work at ~\$500,000 annually.

The bill will adversely affect the operation of the CitiWatch Rebate Program that was launched in FY21. The program allows awards \$150 vouchers and rebates to residents and businesses that install and link cameras to the CitiWatch network.

Fiscal Note

The Agency's budget maintains funding for \$2.2 million of contracts to monitor and maintain the City's CCTV network and \$750,000 of annual subscription costs for gunshot detection technology, which is used in conjunction with crime cameras to assist with criminal investigations. Should these systems no longer be able to be accessed or used, this funding would need to be reallocated to other MONSE-related initiatives.

The Agency's budget also includes a \$400,000 reimbursement received annually from the Housing Authority of Baltimore City for cameras around their buildings, and \$180,000 of gambling Local Impact



Aid for installation and maintenance of cameras in the neighborhoods surrounding Horseshoe Casino and Pimlico Racetrack.

In April 2020, the City adopted an ordinance to establish the aforementioned rebate program. In Fiscal Year 21, the Agency launched the pilot program and between July 3 and December 8, 2020, ~\$12,000 was awarded to residents and businesses for vouchers and rebates to residents and businesses that installed and linked their cameras to the CitiWatch network. It is the Agency's intention to create a communication campaign that highlights this rebate program and City residents' ability to participate as co-producers of public safety in their neighborhoods. While not currently budgeted, it is estimated that this campaign will result in ~\$50,000 worth of rebates and vouchers to Baltimore's residents and businesses in FY22.

Amendments

The Agency respectfully requests that § 41-4 (B)(3)(II) on page 2 be amended to read as follows:

(II) Exclusions.

"Face surveillance system" does not include the following:

- (a) Biometric security system designed specifically to protect against unauthorized access to a particular location or an electronic device;
- (b) Video and audio monitoring or recording technology, such as surveillance cameras, wide-angle cameras, and wearable body cameras;
- (c) Automatic license plate readers;
- (d) Closed-circuit television cameras;
- (e) Gunshot detection hardware and services

While the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement supports the intent of City Council Bill 21-0001, we respectfully ask the City Council to consider the Agency's recommended amendments and to craft a policy that carefully strikes a balance between protecting the constitutional liberties and civil rights of Baltimore residents with enabling BPD's ability to effectively utilize camera technology to crime solve.

Respectfully submitted,



Shantay A. Jackson
Director

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

cc: Sunny Schnitzer, Deputy Mayor, Public Safety
Nina Themelis, Legislative Liaison, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Natasha Mehu, Director, Mayor's Office of Government Relations