

Introduced by: Councilmembers Burnett, Conway, Cohen, and Dorsey

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Investigative Hearing - Use of Facial Recognition Technology in Baltimore

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Department of Transportation, the Law Department, the Office of the Comptroller, the Department of Finance, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender for Baltimore City, the Baltimore Development Corporation, and concerned parties from Baltimore's legal, academic, security, and non-profit sectors to discuss the use of facial recognition technology in Baltimore and any local legislative options for the Baltimore City Council to consider in order to balance public safety, privacy, and individual civil liberties.

Recitals

Facial recognition technology is form of biometric technology that purports to be able to use algorithms to identify individuals based on their faces. While public safety officials may extol this technology as another "arrow in the quiver" for fighting crime, there is no question that facial recognition technology is fraught with collateral issues such as infringements on privacy and individual civil liberties. Further, several prominent academic studies have questioned whether this technology is truly accurate due to algorithmic racial bias against black, indigenous, and people of color.

Recently, recognizing the potential issues associated with the technology, the Baltimore City Council has considered Council Bill 21-0001, which would pause and prohibit most City government and private uses of facial recognition technology. As drafted, the legislation's pause would terminate in 2 years unless the City Council takes further legislative action to have the ban continue. Indeed, the prohibitions on this technology mirror those prohibitions recently passed by cities like Boston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco.

Council Bill 21-0001 was just the beginning of a broader policy discussion. As the use of this technology spreads, it is incumbent on responsible policymakers to study this issue fully hearing from all parties on both sides of this issue. It is the purpose of this resolution and its associated hearings to use the pause time to study facial recognition: its benefits, its downsides, and hear from experts in the field to assess whether the City's pause should continue and whether any further legislative improvements are necessary.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Council invites representatives from the Baltimore Police Department, the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Department of Transportation, the Law Department, the Office of the Comptroller, the Department of Finance, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office, the Office of the Public Defender for Baltimore City, the Baltimore Development Corporation, and concerned parties from Baltimore's legal, academic, security, and non-profit sectors to discuss the use of facial recognition technology in Baltimore and any local legislative options for the Baltimore City Council to consider in order to balance public safety, privacy, and individual civil liberties.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Director of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, the Director of the Department of Transportation, the City Solicitor, the Comptroller, the Director of Finance, the Baltimore City State's Attorney, the District Public Defender for Baltimore City, the Chief Executive Officer of the Baltimore Development Corporation, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.