

06/07/2020

Boston City Council

**Testimony in Support of
Ordinance Banning Facial Recognition Technology in Boston**

Dear City Councilors,

I am writing in support of the ordinance banning facial recognition technology in Boston presented by Councilors Wu and Arroyo. This ordinance establishes a ban on government use of face surveillance in the City of Boston. Boston must pass this ordinance to join Springfield, Somerville, Cambridge, Brookline, and Northampton in protecting racial justice, privacy, and freedom of speech.

During the day, I'm at a keyboard working as a full-time software engineer. When evening comes, I'm in class, or working through problem sets as a part-time Master's Computer Science student at Tufts University. Given my background, I have ample time and a rich vocabulary with which to consider the impacts - societal, economic and moral - of a technology like facial recognition. And after this holistic consideration, I firmly believe that a ban on facial recognition technology is not simply right for the people of Boston, but right for Boston as a whole.

Boston's history is deeply intertwined with our America's love of liberty. This city's humble Tea Party nearly 250 years ago was one of several major catalysts that set us on the course we're on today. And among the many rights our founder's outlined all those years ago, The Fourth Amendment outlines emphatically, I believe, our country's recognition of a person's right to reasonable privacy. Put simply: I hold that the sharp, sleepless eye of facial recognition technology is incommensurable with this liberty. A liberty that was sparked in our harbors.

A ban on face surveillance technology is critically important in the City of Boston because it is currently the wild west when it comes to the use of this technology. Without any regulations, this technology is already being used in secret – without legislative authorization, external oversight, or public disclosure. There is too much at stake to let this technology get out ahead of our basic rights.

I encourage you to press pause on the use of face surveillance by government entities in the City of Boston by supporting and passing this crucial ban. We cannot allow Boston to adopt authoritarian, unregulated, biased surveillance technology.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully,

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