

39 Appleton Ln
Hampstead, NH 08341

June 4, 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.

As a recent graduate of UMass Amherst's Computer Science and Spanish language degree programs and an incoming software engineer at Microsoft's Cambridge Office in a position that interacts directly with the application of machine learning technology, I believe I have sufficient experience to speak on this topic and why it deserves our attention. Over the last decade, researchers have made undoubtedly impressive advancements in fields like computer vision and natural language processing due to the success of neural networks and the increasing abundance of public and private data. These new tools present enormous potential for good, however, from my personal experience and the general consensus of the scientific community studying the intersectionality of algorithmic bias and discrimination, we do not fully understand these new tools and do not meaningfully acknowledge their potential for misuse. As an intern, I remember when researchers, even ones working for Microsoft, exposed the gender and racial biases persistent in machine learning products that were already available to customers, thus proving our current lack of adequate testing standards as well as the unacceptable indifference to ethical concerns prevalent in the tech industry. Furthermore, regardless of our ability to mitigate bias or misuse, I fundamentally disagree with the implementation of this technology for face surveillance which I believe undermines the public's right to privacy and freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean Kelley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sean Kelley