



Maryland Office of the Public Defender



October 14, 2019

Don't Spy on Communities, Invest in them!

Dear Mr. Vignarajah:

The undersigned organizations are deeply disappointed to learn of your readiness to disregard the privacy rights of Baltimoreans under the guise of crime fighting.

The technology you so eagerly embrace, Persistent Surveillance Systems, seeks to create a permanent video record of everywhere that everyone in Baltimore goes any time they go outside.

Of the various crime-fighting proposals touted, this is by far the most sinister. Your proposal demonstrates a distrust for all Baltimoreans, whose every move would be subject to the watchful eye of the government. Under your proposal, the City of Baltimore could and would retain

information about the lifestyles and livelihoods of everyday Baltimoreans—which Church, Synagogue, or Mosque someone attends; whether an immigrant sends money home at a particular Western Union, and how often; whether a child spends weeks and weekends at different homes; who attended which protests against the City. The possibilities are endless.

Even worse, you boast that this pilot program would carry no cost to the City because of Philanthropic support. Is the privacy of Baltimoreans—the people you seek to lead—worth nothing?

Finally, philanthropic support for the City is laudable. However, we urge you and all our potential leaders to seek investments in our children, families, and communities. Perhaps you can consider investing in Baltimore’s schools, housing opportunities, job training, transportation systems, and other supports that could truly keep us safer and help our communities thrive.

Baltimore deserves a leader who will invest in people, not spy on them.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Children and Youth
ACLU of Maryland
Baltimore Algebra Project
CASA
Law Enforcement Action Partnership
Leaders of a Beautiful Struggle
Libertarian Party of Maryland
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
Out for Justice
Power Inside
SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice) Baltimore