May 3, 2022

Sebastopol City Council
Attn: City Clerk Mary Gourley
mgourley@cityofsebastopol.org

Re: Agenda Item No. 17, Consideration of Ordinance Regarding Oversight of the City's
        Acquisition and Use of Surveillance Technology and Imposing a Ban on Certain Types of
        Surveillance Technology

Honorable Members of the City Council:

My name is Lauren Mendelsohn. I am a Sonoma County resident, and I work in Sebastopol. I am also a Chapter Leader of the ACLU of Sonoma County, and a Board Member of the International Cannabis Bar Association and California NORML, although I am not speaking out on behalf of any organization and these words are solely my own.

I am writing in strong support of Item 17 on the May 3, 2022 City Council agenda. Sebastopol has a history of leading Sonoma County when it comes to progressive policies. The proposed ordinance is a progressive policy that would ensure vigorous public debate before our tax dollars are used to fund surveillance technologies. The ordinance would also ban use of Orwellian technologies such as predictive policing and facial recognition. For example, facial recognition technology disproportionately misidentifies and misclassifies people of color (like myself), trans people, and women. The studies show this: MIT research found commercial face recognition systems failed up to 1 in 3 times when classifying the faces of dark-skinned women.[1]

Even if facial recognition were perfectly accurate, it would still give the government the power to spy on us wherever we go: tracking our faces at protests, rallies, and even the comings and goings of citizens at abortion clinics now that the Supreme Court is poised to discard the precedent of *Roe v. Wade*. We cannot allow the normalization of this technology.

Similarly, we cannot allow predictive policing to take root. Predictive policing technologies are an attempted rebranding of the concept of pre-crime popularized in *Minority Report*. By banning predictive policing we are putting in checks and balances to reduce the likelihood of a dystopian future where our faces are tracked everywhere we go.

Please join Council Member Glass in recommending that staff consider the proposed ordinance and return to a future council meeting for city council review of a draft ordinance regarding oversight of the city's acquisition and use of surveillance technology, and imposing a ban on facial recognition and predictive policing technologies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Lauren Mendelsohn, Esq.

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[1] https://news.mit.edu/2018/study-finds-gender-skin-type-bias-artificial-intelligence-systems-0212