May 11, 2020

NYC Council Speaker Corey Johnson
City Hall Office
New York, NY 10007
via Email


Dear Speaker Johnson,

We, the undersigned civil rights and community-based organizations, write to urge you to schedule a vote for the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology (“POST”) Act – Int. No. 0487-2018 at the next New York City Council Stated Meeting.

This legislation, which was needed prior to the COVID-19 crisis, has become only more vital during this pandemic. The legislation would give New Yorkers long-overdue civilian oversight of NYPD surveillance, while remaining one of the most modest oversight reform bills in the country.[1] After more than three years of waiting, the time for reform has come, and we urge you to join the vast majority of your colleagues, the Public Advocate, and the New York Times in supporting this bill.[2]

As New York expands our use of contact tracing to curb COVID-19, public trust has never been more important. If New Yorkers are fearful of how contact tracing data will be misused by police, many will refuse to cooperate with testing, tracking, or treatment. This concern is particularly acute for New York City’s overpoliced communities of color and immigrant communities who fear that contact tracing data may be shared with law enforcement or even ICE. This concern is hardly abstract, as the NYPD has already turned to drones, CCTV, and possibly even cellphone data to track social distance compliance.[3]

We’ve been heartened to see the City Council overcome unprecedented logistical challenges to resume work. While we know there are many emergency public health bills that need to be addressed, we were also heartened to see the Council take on measures ranging from diaper changing accommodations in parks to lead service lines. If the Council is able to take on those non-time-sensitive matters, we certainly expect it will take the long overdue step of passing the POST Act.

As Speaker, you’ve consistently been a champion for communities in need. We urge you to do so once again and join this growing national movement. With your support, we know the POST Act will pass at the City Council’s next stated meeting. We look forward to your reply and assistance.

Cc: Chair Donovan Richards
Council Member Vanessa Gibson
Sincerely,

1. Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
2. Access Now
3. African Communities Together
4. AI Now Institute
5. Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
6. Brennan Center for Justice
7. Brooklyn Community Bail Fund
8. The Calyx Institute
9. Center for Human Rights and Privacy
11. Cryptoparty Ann Arbor
12. Defending Rights & Dissent
13. Electronic Frontier Foundation
14. Empire State Indivisible
15. Equal Justice Under Law
16. Ethics in Technology
17. Fight for the Future
18. Free Press Action
19. Hacking//Hustling
20. Immigrant Defense Project
21. JustLeadershipUSA
22. Legal Aid Society of NYC
23. Lucy Parsons Labs
24. MediaJustice
25. Mijente
26. MinKwon Center for Community Action
27. Movement Alliance Project
28. Muslim Community Network
29. National Action Network
30. A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing)
31. New York Civil Liberties Union
32. NYC Privacy Board Advocates
33. Oakland Privacy
34. PDX Privacy
35. Red Canary Song
36. Restore The 4th
37. Richmond Community Bail Fund
38. Secure Justice
39. Students Against Data Abuse
40. TechActivist.Org
41. Tenth Amendment Center
42. Urban Justice Center - Safety Net Project
