Re: S.T.O.P. Letter of Support for Section 26 of the Police Reform Bill

Dear Speaker DeLeo and President Spilka:

I write on behalf of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.), an internationally recognized privacy and civil rights organization, to urge you in the most explicit possible terms to stand strong against facial recognition. Let me begin by thanking you for your leadership in passing landmark policing reforms for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As someone who lived nearly half my adult life in the Commonwealth, I take great pride in seeing Massachusetts poised to become a national leader on policing and civil rights. But that will only be possible if you return Section 26 to S.2963, reforming the biased and dangerous use of facial recognition technology.

Governor Baker was wrong to strike Section 26, undoing months of careful legislative work. Countless lawmakers, advocates, and constituents came together to craft the compromise you sent to the governor…a compromise he summarily jettisoned.

Massachusetts must press pause on face surveillance

Massachusetts needs Section 26 because facial recognition is biased, broken, and antithetical to the values of a democratic society. The technology automates bias against communities of color, particularly Black women. Every time facial recognition gets it wrong, another one of your neighbors is at risk of wrongful arrest. In the aftermath of the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others, we know that every wrongful arrest can truly be a matter of life and death.

Please keep your resolve to protect Massachusetts residents from this dangerous technology. Please return Section 26 of S.2963 to Governor Baker.

Thank you for your dedication to the people of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Albert Fox Cahn, Esq.
Executive Director