

Equal Rights Commission June 18, 2025 RE: Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)**Public Written Testimony**

Hello,

I understand that next Wednesday, June 18, the Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission will hold a hybrid public meeting to discuss the Milwaukee Police Department's use of facial recognition technology. While I cannot attend, I wanted to make sure my voice is heard.

As your constituent and community member, this is deeply troubling to me. I understand that there are benefits that may be associated with these powerful technologies, however the risk of abuse of power, error, and bias causing irreparable harm, particularly toward oppressed groups, is too great to outweigh the potential benefits. I also understand that the MPD recently revealed that it has used facial recognition technology from neighboring law enforcement agencies for several years despite no local policy governing its use. And they have proposed entering into a contract with Biometrica to trade 2.5 million jail records for two facial recognition software licenses.

Local governments and federal agencies are using data gathered from facial recognition and other surveillance technologies, such as automated license plate readers, artificial intelligence, and more, to target and detain individuals.

ICE and other federal law enforcement agencies are rapidly expanding their surveillance interface in local communities, monitoring and prosecuting political protesters, people seeking reproductive health care, LGBTQ+ individuals, and doctors trying to provide care. This is not the time to expand access to technologies that track and surveil the community.

The [multiple wrongful arrests](#) by police in Detroit and other American cities show that facial recognition technology is fundamentally dangerous in the hands of law enforcement.

Please protect our privacy, well-being, and constitutional rights with meaningful action and protections in the face of these threats. We do not need more surveillance; we need less.

Sincerely,

Miranda Larocque

Date: 06/12/2025

I am a resident of Shorewood, an advocate for criminal justice reform, and am proud to report my part in implementing a study of foster children's interaction with the state's criminal justice system. We need to change the conversation from just offering second chances and/or reducing the criminal population to addressing the causes of why people entering our criminal justice system. The use of facial recognition software, an imperfect science, will increase the number of blacks being stopped by the police. There is already at a racial disparity of 3.1x white rates for these stops, which results in 7.7x racial disparity in incarceration (UWM Ted Lenz). Introducing Facial Recognition software will result in an even greater disparity of black incarceration in Milwaukee County.

Thanks for considering my comments.

Paul Geenen

Date: 06/16/2025

Hi,

My name is John, and I live in Alderperson Alex Brower's district of Milwaukee. I am very concerned about the use of facial recognition within the MPD, as it has been shown to be racist technology that fails at identifying Black and Brown faces. Using this technology could lead to false accusations and unjust sentences. I hope you will reconsider using facial recognition in favor of something that can be more legitimate and safe for all the people of Milwaukee.

Thank you for reading.

John David Dewey

Date: 06/16/2025

Hello,

My name is Arthur Bollis and I live in Alderperson Spiker's district.

The deployment of Facial Recognition in Milwaukee is very worrisome to me, and I demand the MPD NOT be given the tools to deploy it. This technology has repeatedly been shown to be racist - failing to properly identify black and brown faces, leading to false accusations and unjust imprisonments. Many cities across the nation have banned this technology, and ones that are using it are facing multiple lawsuits for unjust arrests. The ERC must say NO to FRT!!

Thank you,
Arthur Bollis

Date: 06/16/2025

Public Testimony on the Use of Facial Recognition Technology by the Milwaukee Police Department

I am submitting this testimony for the public record to express my firm and unequivocal opposition to the Milwaukee Police Department's acquisition and use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT). This technology is dangerous, invasive, and has a well-documented history of disproportionately harming marginalized communities. I am especially concerned for my neighbors of color, women, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, those who are most at risk when tools like FRT are misused or weaponized against the public. As of today, over 700 Milwaukee residents, including myself, have signed a petition opposing MPD's use of facial recognition. I urge the Equal Rights Commission (ERC) not only to oppose this technology but to move boldly and recommend a complete ban on its use in Milwaukee. Milwaukee is a city made up of 63.47% people of color (World Population Review, 2025). These are the very individuals most likely to be misidentified by facial recognition systems. Research consistently shows that FRT has higher error rates when identifying black and brown faces, particularly for black women (National Library of Medicine). The consequences of these inaccuracies are not abstract—they result in wrongful arrests, prolonged detentions, and irreversible harm to people's lives.

According to the National Black Women's Justice Institute, Black women make up about 13% of the U.S. female population but represent 29% of incarcerated women (NBWJI). They are also murdered at a rate six times higher than white women (Columbia University). The recent murder of Sade Robinson in our own community is a tragic reminder of the urgent need to protect—not further surveil—our most vulnerable. Yet, instead of confronting these realities and attempting to protect our most vulnerable, MPD continues to invest in technologies that reinforce existing racial biases. FRT does not make our communities safer. It amplifies harm. There are numerous cases of individuals falsely arrested due to FRT, which underscore the unacceptable risks these tools pose, particularly for black and brown individuals. One such case is Ms. Woodruff, a pregnant woman who was falsely arrested due to facial recognition technology. Her pregnancy had already suffered complications but the stress that a false arrest and sequential lawsuit against the city of detroit and the police officer, may only exasperate stress and complications to her pregnancy. This does not even include the traumatic experience for her two children who had to witness her being arrested under false charges. (APNEWS) Another case is of Robert Julian-Borchak Williams, one of the earliest known cases of wrongful accusation based on failed FRT. Williams was wrongfully arrested after FRT falsely identified him and law enforcement failed to cross check evidence with other tools available for them to use when investigating a case. "This is what technology providers and law enforcement always [emphasize](#) when defending facial recognition: It is only supposed to be a clue in the case, not a smoking gun. Before arresting Mr. Williams, investigators might have sought other evidence that he committed the theft, such as eyewitness testimony, location data from his phone or proof that he owned the clothing that the suspect was wearing"(NY TIMES). In the case of Williams, the police did not take the time to do that. Instead, Williams was detained for 30 hours on his 42nd birthday, and missed work for the first time in 4 years breaking perfect attendance records at his place of work. The argument that Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) is "simply another tool" at the police department's disposal is a lazy and insufficient justification because it deliberately ignores the broader social,

historical, and ethical context in which that "tool" operates: FRT is shaped by the intentions, assumptions, and biases of its creators and users. It is both painful and revealing that we meet to discuss this racist and harmful technology on the eve of Juneteenth. Though slavery was formally abolished in 1865, its legacy lives on in the form of over-policing, targeted surveillance, and racially biased technologies like facial recognition. These tools are not neutral. They perpetuate the same structures of control and punishment that have historically been used against Black Americans. Police brutality and the unchecked deployment of surveillance technologies are not separate issues, they are modern extensions of a long, shameful history of state-sanctioned oppression. To truly honor the spirit of Juneteenth, we must reject any technology that places our communities at greater risk under the false promise of security: I urge the ERC to stand on the right side of history. Do not just resist the use of facial recognition—ban it. Source List

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Extreme Sentences Disproportionately Impact and Harm Black Women. National Black Women's Justice Institute, 2021, <https://www.nbwji.org/post/extreme-sentences-disproportionately-impact-and-harm-black-women>.

Black Women in the U.S. Murdered Six Times More Often Than White Women. Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2024, <https://www.publichealth.columbia.edu/news/black-women-u-s-murdered-six-times-more-often-white-women>.

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Hill, Kashmir. "Wrongfully Accused by an Algorithm." *The New York Times*, 24 June 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/24/technology/facial-recognition-arrest.html>

Stevie Reimer
Date: 06/22/2025

Casey Serrano

My name is Casey, and I live in Alderperson Pratt'd district. I am very concerned about the deployment of Facial Recognition in Milwaukee, and I demand that the MPD not be given the tools to deploy it. Facial Recognition has been shown to be racist technology that fails at identifying Black and brown faces. It will lead to false accusations and unjust imprisonments. **The people of Milwaukee demand that the ERC says NO to Facial Recognition Technology!**

Casey Serrano
Date: 06/18/2025

Hello, my name is Corey Tomasik and I am a resident of Milwaukee. I am writing this in regards to the topic of the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) obtaining and using facial recognition technology (FRT). This is in reference to the ERC meeting held on June 18, 2025 at 4pm. I want to start by stating that I am strongly opposed to the MPD acquiring and using FRT. I find this concerning and believe that this technology will bring harm to the people of the city of Milwaukee. Below are a few reasons as to why I do not support FRT. The use of FRT has been associated with high error rates, especially with people of color, which could reinforce systemic biases. These errors could lead to misidentifications which could have serious consequences such as wrongful stops, arrests, and unnecessary surveillance. This is especially troubling when more than half the population of Milwaukee are persons of color. Milwaukee is also a city that suffers

from racial segregation and FRT may only perpetuate this issue. The unequal treatment caused by errors with FRT can deepen distrust between marginalized groups and the police which would reinforce historical patterns of racial profiling.

The use of FRT by the MPD would further erode public trust between the department and the city's residents. A major concern is who within the MPD would have access to the FRT and our biometric data. Outside of that, what other government and third-party entities would have access to this data. Even more troubling is that the company providing the technology is requesting the mug shots of over two million Milwaukee residents – regardless of whether an individual was convicted of a crime or not. There are also questions on if our biometric data will be continuously shared with the company supplying the FRT? Adding to these concerns the population this is being used on is not able to consent on whether their data can be collected and used. Finally, it is possible that this technology and data could be misused by any individual with access for personal intentions.

In conclusion MPD's acquisition and use of FRT would be unethical, potentially dangerous, and against the rights of the citizens of Milwaukee. I do not support MPD acquiring FRT.

Corey Tomasik

Date: 06/22/2025

Good afternoon,

My name is Diego Garcia and I live in the 1st District (Alderwoman Pratt being my alderwoman.) I am very concerned about the deployment of the facial recognition software in the City of Milwaukee. The organization that I represent, the Milwaukee Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, is also gravely concerned about the possible implementation of facial recognition technology in the Milwaukee Police Department. This technology, and not solely with the company the MPD's been talking to, Biometric, has been proven to be unreliable as it gives false positives. These false positives occur predominately with Black and brown people. The ACLU's article on this shows some statistics regarding this matter ([hyperlink can be found here.](#))

While there is a moral dilemma of the handing over of about 2.5 million mugshots, I want to focus on the consequences of MPD obtaining this software. Really, the MPD has proven on multiple occasions that they are not capable of operating in good faith (especially during the Republican National Convention!) and if given free reign of this facial recognition software it will lead to false accusations and unjust imprisonments. This will not only be a waste of the taxpayer's money, but I will say given the history of MPD's brutality it will only be a matter of time until there is yet another use of force incident because of the technology flagging somebody. This technology will simply cause problems in our communities. Cities such as San Francisco, Boston, and many others have outright ban these types of technology. Why hand over pictures for a software that has been proven to be ineffective??

MAARPR demands that the ERC says NO to facial recognition technology. Our communities deserve better and this is not worth it - not even at the price of 2.5 million mugshots.

Diego Garcia

06/18/2025

Presented in person to the ERC on 05/21/2025

My name is Emilio De Torre with the Milwaukee Turners. I've written this testimony with the help of other community and board members who care deeply about protecting the rights of Milwaukee residents, and standing up to the plight of racism and anti-immigrant feelings and policies that are plaguing our city. Although the Milwaukee Turners have been partners with the ERC for years - jointly hosting Human Rights Day at Turner Hall and virtually, this is my first time attending the committee to bring up such an important topic. The Milwaukee Police Department is seeking to purchase Facial Recognition Technology to use on the residents of Milwaukee. This is incredibly dangerous and a bad step backwards into racial profiling, over policing and unnecessary surveillance of our people. I don't want to bury the lede on this article - The Milwaukee Police Department should not be able to buy and use Facial Recognition Technology on Milwaukee residents. Its use nationally and internationally is ALWAYS racist and anti-immigrant in application, and WILL be compromised

and manipulated by our federal government. There are no SOPs, best practices or guard rails that we, or the police can set up to prevent this. This will happen whether they purchase this technology or continue to use the FRT technology they have access to via other sources. We need you to pressure the Common Council and the Mayor to prevent the use of Facial Recognition Technology. It is far too dangerous in this federal landscape, and the risks FAR outweigh the benefits. Now for some context.

On April 17, The Milwaukee Police Department made a public presentation at the Fire and Police Commission, where I and 28 other people testified against FRT.

I have many years of experience monitoring government use of surveillance and technologies and have taught digital safety and security for decades, both here and in New York City. I also formerly served on Governor Evers Data Privacy and Security Advisory Committee, and have been attending Fire and Police Commissions, and Common Council meetings as a member of the public since 2006. I can't warn you against this technology strongly enough. In its implementation and usage it is ONLY racist and abusive in addition to being another stepping stone to constant government surveillance. Police in China, Russia and the United Kingdom have been using it and have now upgraded to FRT linked body cams that use AI to constantly monitor all people and upload footage to be searched and scanned by their federal governments. In China and Russia it is used to monitor political dissidents and foreign-born people. North Koreans in China are forced to upload daily selfies to help prevent them from emigrating to South Korea. Given the state of affairs in the United States today, it is no longer far-fetched to think that the federal government won't attempt to do something similar to immigrants here. Milwaukeeans are more heavily surveilled today than ever before. City and private owned cameras recording the public - drones, license plate readers, cell site simulators, FLOCK cameras, social media surveillance and fusion centers are operating at all new levels and you'd be hard pressed to find areas not covered by this technology web. It is integrated and easily accessible by federal law enforcement agencies like ICE. This is mass surveillance. It does not deter crime. In April, at least 1300 college students had their visas revoked by the Trump administration for no justifiable reasons. At least 13 at UWM, 10 at Concordia, others from Marquette and MATC - and over 2 dozen from UW Madison alone. These students are our neighbors and children. MY children, neighbors and friends go to these schools. Seemingly, the federal government is monitoring social media and using facial recognition to punish them for expressing their opinions - expression formerly protected by the first amendment. Deportable offenses included linking these students to paid parking tickets, speeding tickets, and other resolved misdemeanors if any reason was given at all. ICE is already in our courthouse. The fear in the immigrant community grows daily. As you know, the City of Milwaukee's website already hosts immigration resources from the Turners, Voces de la Frontera and others because of these threats. I no longer have faith in the division and firewalls between local control and federal government access to otherwise secure information. This includes our fusion centers, of course, and the expanded reach of fusion centers such as we see in the Fiserv Forum and other businesses that were included as part of federal investments in surveillance systems as a result of the DNC and RNC. Fusion Centers are Joint Terrorism Task Forces, that is joint federal-state law enforcement intelligence hubs with a long history of investigating, collecting, and disseminating information on protestors and communities of color, but the public has little information about how these entities work and their impact on our rights. We certainly don't have oversight. The federal government has long exploited Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act to use locally gathered surveillance on US citizens. And we have all seen the violent way that DOGE's very recent access of previously private information regarding the IRS and ICE is being used. The federal government is not doing anything about this. They are encouraging it. We only have you to provide local protections. The rule of law is eroding and the unfettered use of technology is accelerating this, regardless of the intentions of local officers and staff. We need immediate safeguards. The MPD's presentation on FRT indicated that the Milwaukee Police Department is already using facial recognition technology in some capacity. And in line with the significant racial disparities that have led to false identifications, false arrests, and lawsuits in other cities - EACH example in the MPD's report was a Black man. This technology is being used disproportionately on Black faces, even though there are clear concerns about the accuracy of facial recognition on people of color. We know that MPD is using facial recognition technology on our children's faces, and they want to trade 2.5 million "jail records" - which are human faces of members of our community - in exchange for new facial recognition licensing. So what does that mean? FBI data show 26,788 arrests in Milwaukee County during 2023 (which is down from 36k+ pre-2020). After arrest, an individual is referred to the DA's office for prosecution. Between 2020 and 2022, only 42% of referrals resulted in charges. After charges are filed, only 2/3 result in conviction. The other 1/3 are dismissed or deferred. So if we start with 26,000 arrests in a year, we

should expect about 11,000 charges, and about 7,200 convictions. In other words, we should expect only 1 in 4 arrests to result in conviction. That means that approximately 1,875,000 of these photos are of innocent people - people who were not convicted of a crime. And they're being traded for a 1 year site license only. That means each Milwaukee person's biometric data is worth .004 cents to this company. The case studies presented were cases that MPD themselves admitted were solvable without the use of facial recognition technology. The risk and collateral damage of using this technology clearly outweighs the reward. The use of this technology - coupled with the millions invested in these systems already - has chilling effects on first and fourth amendment rights and devastating effects on our society. If the federal government is already revoking visa statuses, how soon until scholarships, probation status, and other things are used to extort compliance and silence? We have JUST heard President Trump tell Salvadoreño dictator Bukele that they need more offshore prisons for "homegrown criminals next." I implore you to prevent the City of Milwaukee from using facial recognition technology like Madison, San Francisco, Boston, Portland, and many other cities have already refused. It is clear that law enforcement does not have the understanding and protections in place regardless of the SOPs that they anticipate writing. The federal government will almost immediately have access to all of this data and the MPD has offered to trade the data and information for many thousands of Milwaukeeans in the database to Biometrica, whose parent company MorphoTrust USA is owned and controlled by the Safran Group - a foreign aerospace, weapons and technology company, who was already fined for \$17.2 million by the United States DOJ for bribing Chinese officials for contracts. This is not acceptable. Our families' identities and biometrics must be protected and not traded as a commodity. Once these systems are in place local law enforcement and the Common Council will no longer have any protections for how this information is used by the federal government or the foreign companies who will have access to this. National evidence shows that when police rely on face-matching software the error rate is far from theoretical: it has already produced a string of wrongful arrests, all involving Black residents, and each example underscores why city officials must slow down, study the data, and establish strong safeguards before deployment. In Detroit, Robert Williams was hand-cuffed in front of his children and jailed overnight after software mis-tagged him in a blurry shop-camera still; the city settled his federal lawsuit in 2024, agreeing to require corroborating evidence for any future arrests based on a "match." And we learned this week that even though New Orleans has this procedure already, the police there did not adhere to those rules. It was too easy for them to just rely on the technology regardless of the law or the racialized inaccuracies. Their cameras were scanning faces in real time and sending alerts to officers' phones without any oversight or knowledge by the City government or public. Two other Detroiters—Michael Oliver and eight-months-pregnant Porcha Woodruff—were also swept up by faulty algorithms; Woodruff's case made her the sixth Black Detroit misidentified since 2019. Farther east, New Jersey resident Nijeer Parks spent ten days in jail and thousands in legal fees after police trusted an erroneous face hit rather than a solid alibi. These incidents are not anomalies: a 2023 Detroit Police log shows the department still runs roughly 125 facial-recognition searches each year, the vast majority on Black men. Peer-reviewed research explains why these misfires cluster on darker faces. MIT's landmark ****Gender Shades**** audit found commercial gender-classification tools erred on darker-skinned women up to 34.7 percent of the time versus 0.8 percent for light-skinned men. A comprehensive 2019 U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology study covering 189 algorithms reported false-positive rates up to 100 times higher for West-African faces than for European faces. The Government Accountability Office's latest review of federal law-enforcement use warns that most agencies still have no formal process for measuring racial-bias or civil-liberty risks. For 1:1 matching, some algorithms falsely matched Black and Asian faces ten to one hundred times more often than white ones. That is exactly what we will be getting here. Given the documented harms and the unresolved accuracy gaps, Milwaukee should—at minimum—adopt the ACLU of Wisconsin's call for a two-year moratorium, pass an ordinance requiring transparency, community input and an affirmative Common Council vote on any new technology, create a community tech-advisory board, and require robust third-party audits before any live deployment. Until the Common Council and the Mayor commit to that rigor, entrusting facial-recognition to routine policing is not public safety; it is an avoidable risk that history shows will fall hardest on Black Milwaukeeans. Finally, consider that the MPD report indicated that the ACLU and NAACP endorsed Biometrica's use of this technology. That was not true. Consider that their report indicated the Mke County Sheriff's Department used Biometrica's FRT to secure 48 of 50 convictions where they used the tech. That was not true. The County Supervisors who spoke with Sheriff Ball about this found that MCSO had never used this technology. There is NO SOP that can be written that will prevent racist algorithms from working the way they do. There is no MPD-created rule that

will prevent the federal government and these foreign weapons manufacturers from having access to our biometric data. The city government and the mayor are our only protection from all of this. To allow the use of this technology, to sell and trade our most personal data, jeopardizes all of our families. Please do everything you can to prevent law enforcement from using Facial Recognition Technology. At this moment in history, it is simply too dangerous. It is dangerous for Black youth in our city, who are already overpoliced. It is dangerous for people seeking reproductive health care who will be tracked and recorded. It is dangerous for our trans families seeking healthcare. It is dangerous for immigrants and mixed-status families who are going to school and work and run the risk of being detained and deported with their children left unattended on the street like the 12 year old boy in Massachusetts yesterday.

Please recommend the Mayor and the Common Council forbid the use of this technology.

Thank you.

Emilio De Torre

Date: 05/21/2025

Erik Kennedy

ElevAsian

Co-Founder

To whomever this may concern: My name is Erik Kennedy; co-founder of ElevAsian and board member for the AAPI Coalition of Wisconsin, and I am writing to you as a concerned Wisconsin AAPI community leader and advocate. I strongly encourage the City of Milwaukee Police Department to reconsider purchasing and expanding the use of facial recognition technology (FRT) as this technology is still not fully accurate; and unfortunately, utilizing this technology will be invasive, inaccurate, and lead to wrongful arrests.

From the community, the feedback that I have received is that FRT misidentifies Asian faces at disproportionately high rates (up to 100 times more than likely than white faces). In addition, I believe that as of right now FRT is incompatible with civil rights and racial equity especially for the majority of Milwaukeeans as we are now a minority-majority city. For me, if our city purchases FRT in its current state, we will take a step backwards as it will lead to racial profiling, discrimination, and paint a community not looking to move forward as there is no oversight and accountability to ensure that FRT is not invasive, enabling racial profiling, etc.

As it has been shared, Asian Americans—particularly immigrants and international students—are already targets of heightened federal surveillance. This is not hypothetical: in 2020, over 1,000 Chinese students had their U.S. visas abruptly revoked under suspicion of being national security threats, many without due process or evidence. Likewise, Asian Americans have long been treated as perpetual foreigners in this country, and the use of facial recognition only deepens this injustice. Surveillance technologies have been used in countries like China and Russia to suppress dissent and monitor immigrant or “foreign” populations—often justified by national security or crime prevention. But as we’ve seen in Milwaukee and across the U.S., these technologies often target already marginalized communities.

I urge the Milwaukee Common Council, Fire and Police Commission, and the Mayor to reject the Milwaukee Police Department’s proposal until the FRT can say without a doubt that it is not flawed and that there is accountability and oversight. We need to continue ensure safeguards, work with community stakeholders, law enforcement, etc. to make our city safer and in its current state, I do not believe we would be achieving it as we would be striking fear in the community especially people of color especially me. Let us continue to move our city forward and achieve a million residents as this will hinder people of color wanting to call Milwaukee home if we approve the purchase and expansion of FRT.

Thank you for your time.

Erik Kennedy

Date: 06/17/2025

Hi,

thanks for allowing me to film so up close tonight. I didn't know how far up I could get, and you were very accommodating. I'm going to be editing and uploading the full - basically full - meeting tonight to instasgram and YouTube and Fakebook. I'll be tagging the news outlets and orgs as well.c

Here is a link to the website <https://architectureofsurveillance.notion.site> I mentioned.

[Hamid Khan](#), who is an organizer and expert on the matters discussed today. He has been covering law enforcement for decades in Los Angeles (which is well versed on the police/stalker state) and elsewhere. Hamid has assembled a copious volume of shareable, useful information and strategies for community. This stuff can help us WIN.

Here is an excerpt from the interview I edited of Hamid Khan with my old employer Laura Flanders, who runs a show on PBS out East.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWw_5EHe6AQ

Hamid is very approachable if you ever feel inclined to reach out for suggestions or collaboration.

All the best and stay in touch. Much gratitude and all the best,

Jonathan Klett

sent from Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk and Menominee homeland

Date: 06/23/025

Hello,

My name is Julissa Velazquez, and I am a resident of Alderwoman Sharlen Moore's district. I was recently made aware of the facial recognition technology that MPD is hoping to implement here in Milwaukee. Facial recognition tech has a long history of racist profiling that fails to accurately identify Black and brown faces, often leading to false accusations and unjust arrests. Milwaukee is already home to one of the most highly incarcerated zipcodes in the nation. There is no reason why the ERC should be allowing the police to further criminalize Black and brown communities.

Stand up for Milwaukee and say no to facial recognition technology!

Julissa Velazquez

Date: 06/18/2025

Good afternoon,

My name is Kallen Bohl, a resident of Alderman Robert Bauman's District.

I am reaching out with concern over the use of facial recognition in Milwaukee and am strongly opposed to MPD receiving the tools to deploy it. Facial recognition systems have been shown to fall short when it comes to correctly identifying People of Color which would lead to disastrous repercussions for our Black and brown communities. The use of facial recognition will lead to false accusations and unjust imprisonments.

May the ERC say NO to facial recognition technology.

Thank you for your time.

Kallen Bohl

Date: 06/16/2025

My name is Katie Panciera. I've lived in Milwaukee (District 14) since July 2019 when I moved here to take a faculty job at MSOE. I have a Ph.D. in Computer Science from the University of Minnesota and prior to my job at MSOE I worked as a User Experience Researcher at Facebook and Google.

At MSOE I teach in the User Experience program helping students learn to meld design, psychology, and computing to create ideal experiences for people. As part of this work I teach courses on inclusive design, AI, and cybercrime. I have joint appointments in Humanities, Social Science, and Communication as well as the Computer Science and Software Engineering Departments.

When I teach my students about AI, we talk about false positives and false negatives as well as true positives and true negatives. With the use of facial recognition technology (FRT) a true positive would be a suspect

identified through a database that is guilty of the crime. A true negative would be someone who wasn't identified but wasn't guilty. False positives and false negatives are much more problematic. A false positive is someone who is identified but not guilty and a false negative is someone who isn't identified but is guilty. When we talk about false positives and negatives, we talk about the implications of both to figure out which is worse. We have examples of false positives with FRT systems, when someone is arrested for crimes they did not commit. Michael Oliver. Nijeer Parks. Randal Reid, Alonzo Sawyer, Robert Williams, Porcha Woodruff, Christopher Galtin, Jason Vernau. All of these people are Black which is not a coincidence. A 2019 study by the National Institute of Standards and Technology found that commercial algorithms are biased and false positive rates are highest among Black and Asian faces. (Generally over 100 times more false positives than white faces.) Using mugshots to match Indigenous Americans had the highest false positive rate followed by Black and Asian populations. False positives are higher in women than men. False positives are higher in older adults than in children. Using mugshots to match, false negatives are higher in Asian and Indigenous American individuals and white and Black faces had the lowest false negative rate. With other images, people who were Black and older had the highest false negative rate. False negatives are also problematic. If a face is in the database and the system can't match it, that is someone who should be questioned but will not be. All of this means that both false negatives and false positives have negative consequences for both individuals and the community. So this is a system that, when it makes mistakes, will actively harm people. And we know that it will make mistakes, because humans are still a necessary part of the system. While most departments introducing FRT insist that there will be human oversight, due to our deference to technology and understaffing in policing, it's easy for the human to assume the computer system is correct and arrest or interrogate the top match. In some cases, detectives neglected to even ask suspects for their whereabouts before jailing them. This "automation bias" or bias towards automated decision-making and against other pieces of evidence is something that has been studied for over 30 years and exists for most people. We then have to go back to who is most likely to be harmed by these systems. Dr. Joy Boulamwini, the founder of the Algorithmic Justice League, found in 2015 that the "gold-standard" benchmark dataset was made up of 59.4% lighter-skinned males and only 4.4% women of color. So failing on every single woman of color in the dataset would still yield an accuracy rate of 95.6%, an A by almost every standard I know. What accuracy rate would make us feel comfortable? I know that policing isn't perfect, but outsourcing this research and reasoning to computers will not make us safer. I understand the appeal of FRT, but the data and experiences from other cities should be a warning to us that FRT is not going to solve our problems. In fact the biases built into these systems through training data alone combined with automation bias and personal biases will likely deepen distrust of the police by non-white, non-middle-aged, non-male, and non-cisgender people in Milwaukee. We're not in a state that has any state laws around the use of facial recognition technology and federal legislation has not made it out of committee. While MPD has said they will make people take racial bias training and will have human oversight, it is hard to know what damage may be done through these systems.

Please do not recommend the usage of this technology.

Thank you for your time.

Katie Panciera

Date: 06/18/2025

Good morning,

My name is Kathryn Wodtke, and I live in Alderwoman Milele Cogg's district. I am extremely concerned about the acquisition and deployment of facial recognition technology in Milwaukee. I am writing to urge you to prevent the Milwaukee Police Department from acquiring these tools. Many studies have shown that Facial Recognition is a racist technology that fails to accurately identify black and brown faces. It would lead to false accusations and unjust imprisonments of Milwaukee community members. The people of Milwaukee demand that the ERC says NO to Facial Recognition Technology!

Wisconsin already has one of the highest incarceration rates in the country for Black people

(<https://wisconsinexaminer.com/briefs/wisconsins-racial-disparities-among-incarcerated-people-remain-high/>).

Facial Recognition technology deployed by MPD will make this horrific situation even worse. On this

Juneteenth holiday, please reflect on your values and make a choice to act in support of Milwaukee's Black

and Brown community members. Our communities of color deserve safety and freedom. We urgently need to be REDUCING racism in our city's police department, not FUELING RACISM!

Thank you,

Kathryn Wodtke

Date: 06/19/2025

Esteemed members of the Equal Rights Commission,

I pray that this message finds you in good health and spirits.

My name is Nickolas X Doherty, and I am writing on behalf of the Milwaukee Turners to oppose the MPD's continued use of Facial Recognition Technology on Milwaukeeans - this technology is dangerous and this moment in American history exacerbates that danger. This technology disregards our civil liberties, and opens the city up to potential lawsuits, and there is no way to protect our data from being accessed by the federal government. We are here today to discuss the mass surveillance of Milwaukeeans. It's sad that we have reached this point but we are here, so we must deal with reality. The first question we must explore is why law enforcement feels it is necessary to monitor Americans. We can't say "terrorism" because the data says you have more of a chance of being struck by lightning than being a victim of terrorism. Blaming "crime" has been an age-old excuse for more military weapons and technology yet crime rates don't really improve, and policing is not about ridding the country of crime but managing it instead. It is clear that law enforcement already has the prerequisite skill and technology to identify and pursue people who have broken laws, so why must we be monitored like this? Why do they want to recognize our face and monitor our movements in real time? Why do they want to build a profile on us and monitor our social media? Why do they want an ideological profile on us? Why do they want to know our families and our networks? Why do they want to disregard our civil liberties by invading our privacy? What are they really looking for? If we look deeply into this we find that this is not just "regular" civilians or so-called criminals. Instead this technology is also being used on executives, elected and appointed officials, and activists who are also being monitored by various aspects of government, and with the current political climate and political persecutions this is capricious and dangerous. Now local law enforcement wants to deploy the same technology that is being weaponized against the American public by the federal government. So I again ask what is the government looking for and why do they wish to use this on us? The increased usage of surveillance technologies appears to be less about addressing crime or public safety, and more about responding to a broader shift in public consciousness. As more people become aware of systemic injustices, historical truths, and structural inequalities, surveillance is being used to monitor, manage, and potentially suppress this rising awareness. Rather than protecting the public, these tools increasingly function to preserve existing power structures in the face of growing dissent and coerce people into becoming comfortable with near constant surveillance. While I understand the stated intent behind implementing this new technology, I must express serious concern about the motivations and potential impact of this technology on our community. Data shows this technology is faulty and leads to misidentification and arrest of people from marginalized communities. We believe this technology will be directed against Black, Immigrant, Latino, Women and LGBTQIA communities. The Institute for justice reported police in Kansas using Flock cameras to stalk ex-girl friends. In Norfolk Virginia a lawsuit was filed against the use of Flock cameras because they monitor every vehicle without a warrant and create a digital footprint that monitors everywhere any vehicle goes. Flock is developing a new software called NOVA that wants to link to social media, AI and other technologies to build an active real time library to monitor Americans. This is a massive "people look up" tool. Automated licence plates readers have been used as a tool of oppression in regimes like Israel and China. If local police integrate various surveillance technologies, we will effectively have miniature intelligence agencies operating in every district. This isn't far-fetched since local fusion centers already do this. Facial recognition technology has led to wrongful arrests around the country. According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology Black and Asian faces are misidentified 10 to 100 times more often than white faces. Black women get misidentified up to 35% in some algorithms. When the Milwaukee Police Department did their presentation at the Fire and Police Commission every example of the way MPD is already using FRT was a black face. With this high rate of misidentifications it increases the risk of violent use of force against innocent people because police are likely to use this technology for violent offenses. In other words they will respond to innocent everyday people in a violent military fashion. Over 13 cities have banned facial recognition technology; which are San Francisco California, Boston Massachusetts, Portland Oregon, Portland Maine,

Springfield Massachusetts, Alameda California, Berkeley California, Oakland California, Brookline Massachusetts, Cambridge Massachusetts and the list goes on. It was reported in 2021 that Israel has a smartphone technology called Blue Wolf that captures photos of Palestinians' faces and matches them to a database of images so extensive that one former soldier described it as the army's secret "Facebook for Palestinians" according to the Washington post. Now the Milwaukee police want a Facebook of Milwaukeans. And China has used this technology in an oppressive manner against its Uyghur Muslim population. The Turners are in alignment with the general public in opposition to this issue. 29 members of the public showed up to testify in opposition to FRT at an FPC meeting in April - an incredible number in a post-Act 12 FPC. Although we are only able to speak for a short time here, there are many who have voiced their opposition to FRT through emails, phone calls.

With all of this being said, I encourage you to make a strong recommendation to the mayor and common council warning against this dangerous violation of our privacy and civil liberties.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Brother Mustafa (Nickolas X Doherty)

Confronting Mass Incarceration Coordinator

Milwaukee Turners

Date:06/18/2025

Dear Alderman Brower and the Equal Rights Commission,

My name is Olivia McClain and I live in Alderman Brower's district.

I am writing to you regarding the meeting today about Facial Recognition technology and the Milwaukee Police Department. Do not allow the MPD to sell mugshots in exchange for Facial Recognition technology (FRT) from Biometrica. Do not sell our people's data to a private company. We cannot control what they do with the data. Additionally, we are currently experiencing a fascist government at the federal level. As the Trump administration continues to create in-groups and out-groups of who is legally protected in our country, it is likely that the federal government will pressure local governments to access technology resources. Deploying further surveillance (FRT) puts our community at risk for unjust prosecution and takes away our right to privacy. It's like Big Brother in 1984.

Finally, Facial Recognition technology [has been proven](#) to misidentify African/American, Asian, and Native peoples, as well as women, children and the elderly due to algorithmic bias. We already have issues of people of color and other marginalized people being unjustly detained, charged, and convicted of crimes they didn't commit. Deployment of this technology will make this problem even worse.

As a community member, I say no to the Biometrica deal and urge the Milwaukee City Council to ban the use of Facial Recognition technology, like Madison did in 2020 (Ordinance 62413).

Thank you,

Olivia McClain

Date: 06/18/2025

To Whom It May concern:

I have been reading about the possibility of the Milwaukee Police Department acquiring a facial recognition technology. I understand that Police Chief Norman would have to implement it first but that the Common Council would either approve or disapprove of the decision.

I would be in favor of such technology for the Milwaukee Police Department. I think it would cut down on crime a great deal. I believe if any person might be mistakenly identified by such technology that the human factor in the police department would sort things out very quickly. I understand my email might be read into the public record for this technology. Thank you for your attention, as always.

Sincerely,

Patty Jerving

mother of fallen MKE P.O. Peter Jerving

Date: 06/16/2025

Hello,

My name is Rheanna Henderson, I live in Sharlen Moore's district. I am very concerned about the deployment of Facial Recognition in Milwaukee and I demand that not only the MPD NOT be given the permission to use FRT, it needs to be banned. Facial Recognition has been shown to be a racist technology that fails at identifying Black and Brown faces. It WILL lead to false accusations and unjust imprisonments. I have seen firsthand how the MPD has profiled black and brown people in my community. I was also extremely disturbed to learn that the MPD are already using this technology without notifying the public! I found their comments about not needing to get permission to use this technology extremely concerning. This will only erode what little trust the MPD has with the community.

What concerns me the most is how this technology will be used in the future. The data will be shared with a 3rd party company. Who will have oversight over that data and how will it be protected? How do we guarantee it won't be used and shared with outside parties? What if that company goes under? We have all seen what has happened with 23 and me and how quickly people's personal data can be sold.

We are seeing in real time Doge collect data across the federal government and combine it into a centralized database. This is a huge invasion of privacy. If we give the MPD the ability to use FRT, who knows how it will be used and abused in the future. The request to use Facial Recognition technology needs to not just be denied, it needs to be banned.

Thank you,

Rheanna Henderson

Date: 06/20/2025

My name is Shary Tran, and I am speaking today as a concerned Asian American and community advocate. I strongly oppose the Milwaukee Police Department's proposal to purchase and expand the use of facial recognition technology (FRT). This technology is not only inaccurate and invasive—it is fundamentally incompatible with civil rights and racial equity, especially for Asian American communities and other communities of color. Facial recognition technology consistently underperforms on non-white faces. A landmark 2019 study by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) found that Asian and Black individuals were up to 100 times more likely to be misidentified by facial recognition systems than white individuals ([NIST 2019](#)). Despite this, law enforcement agencies across the country continue to deploy this tool with minimal oversight, accountability, or concern for racial bias. Asian Americans—particularly immigrants and international students—are already targets of heightened federal surveillance. This is not hypothetical: in 2020, over 1,000 Chinese students had their U.S. visas abruptly revoked under suspicion of being national security threats, many without due process or evidence ([NYT, 2020](#)). When local police feed FRT data into federal systems like fusion centers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and other federal agencies gain unchecked access to these databases. This raises real fears about deportation, blacklisting, and retaliation for constitutionally protected speech—particularly among Asian American youth and immigrants. Asian Americans have long been treated as perpetual foreigners in this country, and the use of facial recognition only deepens this injustice. Surveillance technologies have been used in countries like China and Russia to suppress dissent and monitor immigrant or “foreign” populations—often justified by national security or crime prevention. But as we've seen in Milwaukee and across the U.S., these technologies often target already marginalized communities. The Milwaukee Police Department has admitted that they're already using facial recognition tools and proposes to trade over 2.5 million images—including mugshots of people who were never convicted—for a one-year license. This means that Asian American Milwaukeeans, who already experience disproportionate policing in neighborhoods like the South Side, may find their biometric data shared without consent, due process, or the ability to opt out. Nationally, facial recognition has already led to wrongful arrests. Robert Williams, a Black man in Detroit, was falsely arrested after software misidentified him. He later won a settlement after being handcuffed in front of his children and jailed overnight (ACLU, 2021). Every known case of wrongful facial recognition arrest in the U.S. has involved a person of color. These cases aren't exceptions—they're warnings. We must not normalize the use of racially biased, privacy-invading surveillance tools. Cities

like San Francisco, Boston, Portland, and Madison have all banned facial recognition technology for a reason: it is too dangerous, flawed, and easily abused. Asian Americans in Milwaukee are watching. We know what it means to be surveilled. We know what it means to have our loyalty questioned. We know what it means to be misidentified, misrepresented, and misjudged. We are calling on the Milwaukee Common Council and Mayor to reject MPD's proposal and follow the lead of cities that have chosen to put civil rights over surveillance. Facial recognition does not make us safer. It makes us more vulnerable.

Respectfully,

Shary Tran

Date: 06/18/2025

Good afternoon!

I was hoping to make it to the meeting today but I'll miss it unfortunately. I wanted to still leave some feedback though. I think it would be a mistake to enable MPD to use facial recognition technology even in the best of times, which we are not in. FRT usage could enable federal officers to target political dissenters and undocumented folks alike. Also, we have seen time and time again technology like this not work on Black and brown people and get it wrong. Even in the best of times, it would enable the most punitive justice system possible rather than being a restorative justice system. Also, it rubs me the wrong way that MPD lied about their usage. That doesn't bode well for the future.

Thanks,

Will Ohm

Date: 06/18/2025

Hello Milwaukee Alders,

Thank you for signing the May 14 letter to MPD Chief Norman stating your opposition to the deployment of facial recognition technology in our city. Despite the community's clear message that we do not welcome FRT, Chief Norman has indicated the MPD still plans to pursue FRT. **The only way to protect the community and avert the consequences named in your letter is to introduce a full ban on FRT.**

The city of Milwaukee has at least 5,727 CCTV cameras accessible to the MPD - that's 10 cameras per 1,000 people. We also know the MPD utilizes cellphone interceptor technology and drones to further surveil our communities. The addition of facial recognition technology is a serious threat to our personal privacy, political and religious expression, and our fundamental freedom to live our lives without having every movement and association secretly monitored and analyzed by law enforcement. There is a lack of transparency regarding how facial recognition data is collected, stored, and used, making it difficult for individuals to understand and control their privacy. Data is often collected en masse and without consent, adding to concerns over data breaches involving facial recognition data because facial images are unique identifiers that cannot be easily changed.

Facial recognition algorithms are notoriously inaccurate and racist, and this must be taken into consideration for our city where over half the population are people of color. A study done by the US federal government showed that African American and Asian faces were up to 100 times more likely to be misidentified than white faces, and the highest false-positive rate was among Native Americans. These surveillance activities raise major human rights concerns, especially when there is evidence that Black people are already disproportionately criminalized and targeted by the police. This technology has even led to false arrests. The potential for misuse of collected data, including identity theft, stalking, and harassment, is a major concern.

Right now, there are no published policies dictating how the Milwaukee Police Department uses invasive surveillance tools — or how the associated data is shared with federal law enforcement agencies like ICE, other state and local jurisdictions, or private corporations. Furthermore, the recent expansion of MPD's surveillance technology, in particular due to budget increases provided for the

DNC & RNC, demonstrates that residents have little to no say in preventing MPD from expanding its surveillance capabilities.

I do not support discrimination and racism in our city, and this technology will only further equip the single largest, sanctioned perpetrator of these epidemics on our streets - the Milwaukee Police Department.

Thank you,

-Breonne Miller

Date: 06/18/2025

Good evening,

I would like to register my strong opposition to MPD using facial recognition technology for a multitude of reasons that include privacy, civil rights, the trading of mugshots and personal information of incarcerated people in the state's care to private entities and the fact that it was shown in the FPC meeting that MPD was disingenuous multiple times in both their presentation and their testimony. Please do what you can as a body to hold them accountable.

Warmly,

Amelia Berendt

Date: 06/18/2025