

January 21 2020

Dear Members of the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology:

On behalf of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle – an organization striving to empower, enable, and assist African Americans, other people of color and disadvantaged individuals in becoming self-sufficient. – we are writing to urge this Committee to oppose the 2020 WA Privacy Act (HB 2742 / SB 6281), and to instead support the Face Surveillance Moratorium bill (HB 1654 / SB 5528).

Technology has too frequently been used as a tool of oppression, and we are concerned that the face surveillance aspects of the 2020 WA Privacy Act (SB 6281) could have negative impacts on communities of color. Face surveillance technology has not yet been adequately assessed to ensure that it's not biased, which is a critical step in determining whether this tool can be safely used on the public. In order to responsibly address the use of facial recognition tools in the state of WA, we urge you to oppose 2020 WA Privacy Act (HB 2742 / SB 6281), and support the Face Surveillance Moratorium bill (HB 1654 / SB 5528).

As an organization concerned with the welfare of communities of color, particularly Black communities which have been historically unfairly targeted by law enforcement, we hope our concerns are taken seriously by this committee. Proper governance of face surveillance technologies is a matter of protecting fundamental civil liberties.

Beyond the problematic facial recognition components of the 2020 WA Privacy Act (HB 2742 / SB 6281), there are also vague phrases that undermine the ability of consumers to control their data. We urge the committee to carefully examine each aspect of this bill, which we have found to contain potential loopholes that tech companies could exploit.

We believe the 2020 WA Privacy Act does not create meaningful protections for the WA public, particularly people experiencing homelessness. We strongly urge this Committee to oppose the 2020 WA Privacy Act (HB 2742 / SB 6281), and to support Face Surveillance Moratorium (HB 1654 / SB 5528).

Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle