

Metropolitan Government of Nashville & Davidson County

**COMMUNITY OVERSIGHT BOARD**

222 Second Avenue North, Suite 370-M

Nashville, TN 37201

Telephone: 615-880-1800

Email: [community@nashville.gov](mailto:community@nashville.gov)

April 19, 2021

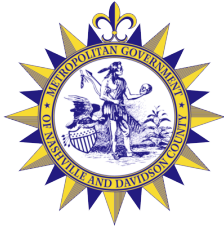
Members of the Metropolitan Council  
Metro Historic Courthouse  
One Public Square, Suite 204  
P. O. Box 196300  
Nashville, TN 37219-630

Dear Council Members:

Since November of last year, the Community Oversight Board has followed Metro Council discussions on license plate readers (LPRs), and has heard from three council members who have sponsored LPR legislation during COB monthly meetings. The COB urges Metro Council table any amendments to the Metro Charter allowing LPRs until more community members have a chance to contribute to the discussion and we have more transparency about motivations behind the legislation.

All Nashvillians deserve the opportunity to weigh in and learn more about this policing technology which treats every citizen as a prospective criminal. Core to the motivation of advocates and Nashville voters responsible for the creation of the COB is giving a voice to our community in deciding how they will be policed. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made meaningful community engagement for many community members almost impossible. As our everyday interactions shifted online last year, our community's digital divide became more evident. In the summer of 2020, a Metro Nashville Public Schools survey estimated that 20% of MNPS families did not have access to the internet. All committee meetings related to LPRs have been held online, and few allowed any questions or comments from community members. Debating a police technology likely to disproportionately impact low-income areas and communities of color on an online platform excludes residents who will be most impacted by the legislation.

The COB is equally concerned with questions arising from the involvement of a nonprofit called SaferNashville, who council members have indicated is willing to donate LPR equipment to the city. Little is known about this organization, though its stated purpose is to "supply our Police and communities with the necessary tools and technology not funded by Metro Council but needed to make Nashville a safer city for businesses and neighborhoods." In a January email from its founder Dan McVicker, the organization lists the following people as members of their board of trust: Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Charles, District Attorney Glenn Funk, City of Belle Meade Police Investigator Tom Sexton, Council Member Courtney Johnston, Council Member Bob Nash, and former Belle Meade Mayor Gray Thornburg. Nashvillians deserve to know who is funding an organization claiming to know what our community needs to be safer, and which private interests stand to benefit from the use of LPRs in Nashville.



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While LPRs are an intuitively appealing idea, the costs may outweigh the benefits and they do not create the neighborhood environments that promote public safety. Debating increased surveillance has taken the place of essential conversations about how the Metro Council can support communities in creating public safety through alternatives to the criminal justice system. Mayor Cooper's Office, for example, has committed to investing in community groups who are using evidence-based, community informed approaches to make our neighborhoods safer. For an intervention to be community-based, the community who is most impacted must have a seat at the table. Our community's safety is our top priority and community safety concerns should be taken seriously. As the country reimagines the role of policing, we should look to create community-based solutions for our very real public safety issues, and not opt for increasing surveillance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrés Martínez".

Andrés Martínez

Chair

Community Oversight Board