

My name is Sarah Hamid, and I lead the Policing Tech Campaign at the Carceral Tech Resistance Network. CTRN's work focuses on building literacy and power within those communities that are most often caught between vulnerability and the need for public services on the one hand, and a historically accepted diminished expectation for privacy and data sovereignty.

That intersection is really important because it means that our communities are having to effectively barter their right to control and data sovereignty in exchange for meeting basic needs. Having to barter data for free lunches. Having to barter data for access to basic health care. Having to barter data for access to mobility — or, in the case of remote monitoring for folks who've been impacted by carceral institutions, having to barter data for freedom.

For the broader public, accustomed to seeing this conversation framed in a very narrow way, they can be somewhat flippant about this exchange. I grew up with the internet, so the idea that you have to trade your data for quote/unquote FREE services like Facebook and Google seems intractable.

But including communities made vulnerable by structural inequity in this conversation changes it dramatically: this is not about an inconvenient exchange of data to access leisure or luxury services — this is about the coerced capture of data that you lose control over forever in exchange for things you need to live like care, housing, and food.

The temporality of that loss of control is also critical: data, once captured by these systems, don't remain in a single database. They move between bureaus and agencies, between functions and contexts. It's often packaged and re-packaged — and monetized and sold. So that means that this economy of coercive exchange establishes a profit motive to extract extremely sensitive data from vulnerable communities. Vendors make money from the surveillance and expropriation of data from communities struggling to survive.

Moreover, that data can come back to haunt these communities, years down the line, in violent and horrific ways. In the past five years, we've seen data from state DMVs being used to tear apart families and incarcerate undocumented community members for an indefinite period of time. We've seen data from public health services used to criminalize low-income parents and renters. We've seen data from the most mundane sensors designed for traffic safety used to prohibit youth from doing the most normal things like hanging out outside with their friends.

Brian said something interesting about ShotSpotter, the acoustic gun detection systems that the "privacy concerns are vastly overstated" because the system captured human voice so infrequently. But privacy is a limited metric here — ShotSpotter also has an impact on trust and a community's sense of freedom. If communities haven't been brought along and made aware of the limitations of these kinds of systems, they have no choice but to live in a state of fear and paranoia. Paranoia that means that they'll fear

walking around congregating. Paranoia means, for a city like Portland that is proud of its diversity and culture of broad acceptance — one of the reasons that my family moved here — entire categories of community members will increasingly avoid public life.

A word we've heard a lot today is "trust." For vulnerable communities, this loss of trust is stark and with dire consequences. If you can no longer access care with any assurance that this information will not be used to take away your children, you're forced to make horrific decisions. We saw that during the early stages of COVID-19: folks choosing not to seek care or even get COVID-19 tests because they had no idea if doing so would impact the safety and security of their loved ones. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that public health is a collective effort. Denying yourself care to protect your family from other kinds of violence has consequences for everyone who comes in contact with you.

This ordinance will not repair that trust — these kinds of procurements and experiments have been allowed to expand, unregulated, too long for one policy to achieve that. But what this ordinance does achieve is to prioritize this conversation. We can't pretend anymore that this kind of technological creep can continue to expand unregulated without directly affecting the condition of life for Portland's diverse communities. This transparency layer is, if nothing else, a firm commitment to prioritizing the safety, mobility, and freedom of all Portlanders. This is a limited but necessary step towards preserving the democracy of Portland's civic and public life.