Media Contact: Caitlin Johnsont
johnson.caitlin@gmail.com
216.502.7172

Statement: Shaker Heights Officials Betray Community's Values by Clinging to Flock

Shake Off Flock calls for real safety solutions, not surveillance

Many people move to Shaker Heights because of the values we share. We take pride in our city's legacy of integration and inclusion. We want to live somewhere that has been on the right side of history. Today, Shaker leaders are demonstrating remarkable naiveté in the face of rising authoritarianism powered by AI surveillance tools like Flock. We will look back on this time as a moment when we have fallen woefully short of our community's professed ideals.

The amended contract with Flock amounts to little more than a pinkie promise. Whatever so-called guardrails they've put in writing, Flock still owns the hardware and still has access to all the data. It still has a documented history of sharing data with ICE, using customer data to test new features without authorization, and refusing to remove cameras even after cities have cancelled contracts.

It appears that Shaker officials do not fully understand how closely many local law enforcement agencies are collaborating with ICE. How do they plan to track additional Ohio agencies that enter into 287g agreements? How quickly will those agencies be barred from searching Shaker's data? How will they address the fact that many of the agencies that conducted immigration searches of Shaker's data did not have such formal agreements, but do work on behalf of ICE regardless? What about the agencies that don't have 287g agreements but work closely with those that do?

Further, the Flock system assumes the user is being honest when entering the reason for the search. Yet we've seen numerous examples of officers using them to stalk ex-partners, harass journalists and target activists. Why would we not believe that some unscrupulous users might lie about immigration searches as well?

Flock and ALPR cameras are more likely to be in Black and brown communities. Cleveland Councilwoman Stephanie Howse-Jones noted that her ward – Ward 8 – has more cameras than other parts of the city, but says they haven't helped catch criminals even when they are directly recorded committing crimes. "Cameras do not make us safe! What makes us safe is having a comprehensive legal approach… I'm not going to vote for this legislation because we as a city have dropped the ball on true investments in what really makes us

safe." Study after study supports her claims. Yet Mayor Weiss and Shaker City Council would rather take the word of a privately held corporation backed by Peter Thiel and Marc Andreessen.

Most concerning – out of either fear, ignorance or political expediency – Shaker's leaders refuse to recognize the moment we're in as a nation. Immigrants, most of whom have committed nothing more than a paperwork violation, are being held in detention camps. Hundreds are on a hunger strike at Delaney Hall in New Jersey. Trump's FBI raided the offices of the voter registration organization Ohio Organizing Collaborative and questioned staff, volunteers and board members. They are targeting protestors in Minnesota and activists in Michigan.

By clinging to Flock, Shaker Heights is complicit in a system that is separating families and destroying lives. Our leaders are falling short of the values that draw so many to our community. Every Shaker resident should take note.

Learn more at ShakeOffFlock.org