Members of the House Innovation, Technology, and Economic Development Committee,

My name is Samroz Jakvani and I am here today to read a statement on behalf of MAPS-AMEN, the American Muslim Empowerment Network serving the Muslim communities of Puget Sound. I urge this Committee to oppose SB 5376, a bill that we believe would harm the Muslim communities in Washington state, by allowing for the widespread use of face surveillance tools with little to no protections.

Face surveillance poses unique civil rights and civil liberties concerns. A person can choose to not drive their car or not to bring their cell phone to a political protest, but they cannot leave their face at home. The use of facial recognition technology without a warrant or suspicion of criminal activity—as in Washington County near Portland, for example—can leave communities hesitant to engage in constitutionally protected free speech, such as attending protests, going to places of worship, or just going about their daily lives without being watched by the government.

Face surveillance hits vulnerable communities hardest. The government has long used surveillance technologies to target specific communities, and face surveillance is a far more powerful technology with the potential to amplify existing biases. For example, since communities of color are already under much more video and image surveillance than white neighborhoods, cameras with face surveillance looking for violations of the law are more likely to find them in those areas. Current facial recognition technology is also biased and inaccurate.[1,2,3] Multiple expert studies have found facial recognition technology to be less accurate at identifying women, youth, trans and gender non-conforming people, and people of color, leading to the risk of false matches.[4,5]

Powerful tools like facial recognition only give the government more power to surveil Muslims and other vulnerable communities. The facial recognition provisions in the bill do little to curtail the dangerous ways face surveillance tools can be used to disproportionately harm not only Muslims, but other marginalized groups, including communities of color, immigrants, religious and gender minorities, organizers, and protesters.

I urge this committee to support the communities that would be harmed by the permissive facial recognition provisions in this bill and oppose SB 5376.

[1] Harwell, D. (2019). Amazon facial-identification software used by police falls short on tests for accuracy and bias, new research finds. *The Washington Post*. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/01/25/amazon-facial-identification-software-used-by-police-falls-short-tests-accuracy-bias-new-research-finds/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1422e0e6aeb7 [Accessed 31 Jan 2019].
[2] Lohr, S. (2019). Facial Recognition is Accurate, if You're a White Guy. *The New York Times*. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/09/technology/facial-recognition-race-artificial-intelligence.html [Accessed 31 Jan 2019].
[3] Knight, W. (2018). Facial recognition has to be regulated to protect the public, says AI report. *MIT Technology Review*. Available at: https://www.technologyreview.com/s/612552/facial-recognition-has-to-be-regulated-to-protect-the-public-says-ai-report/ [Accessed 31 Jan 2019].
[4] Snow, J. (2018). Amazon's Face Recognition Falsely Matched 28 Members of Congress With Mugshots. *The American Civil Liberties Union*. Available at: https://www.aclu.org/blog/privacy-technology/surveillance-technologies/amazons-face-recognition-falsely-matched-28 [Accessed 31 Jan 2019].
[5] Hao, K. (2019). Making face recognition less biased doesn't make it less scary. *MIT Technology Review*. Available at: https://www.technologyreview.com/s/612846/making-face-recognition-less-biased-doesnt-make-it-less-scary/ [Accessed 31 Jan 2019].