

ACLU of Wisconsin: Supports Common Council letter calling for police surveillance reforms in Milwaukee

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MILWAUKEE— The ACLU of Wisconsin today praised a [letter](#) sent Wednesday by four members of the Milwaukee Common Council to the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, calling for urgent reforms to police surveillance technology and citing the alleged misuse of the technology by a city police officer as evidence of the need for major oversight and changes.

The authors wrote that the case raises many critical questions about MPD's use of Flock that the city must address, including the lack of transparency around officer training, supervision, auditing, disciplinary action, privacy, and data sharing, and the department's compliance with local and state law requires immediate public clarification.

The letter states that these accusations of misconduct “underscore a systemic oversight gap rather than an isolated failure,” demonstrating the lack of transparency, guardrails, and oversight governing Flock's use by local law enforcement, and calls on the city to adopt policies that would more tightly regulate how this technology is used and set standards for how police can deploy surveillance technology going forward.

The list of proposals includes requirements for independent auditing and review thresholds, proper logging and documentation of Flock use, protections against license plate readers being used illegally by ICE, transparent reporting, and public hearings. They also advocate adopting a Community Control Over Police

Surveillance (CCOPS) framework to regulate all surveillance technology in Milwaukee, a proposal that the ACLU of Wisconsin has long supported.

Amanda Merkwae, Advocacy Director at the ACLU of Wisconsin, said the following:

“We are grateful to the members of the Common Council for recognizing the extraordinary risk a surveillance system like Flock poses when allowed to operate unchecked – without proper oversight, safeguards, or public transparency obligations. Flock is an incredibly powerful technology that indiscriminately collects license plate data from countless drivers every day, enabling the government to track where and when people drive without a warrant. With a tool this invasive, we must implement strong standards to protect against abuse and violations of people’s rights.

Over the last year, we have heard MPD make several contradictory claims about how police use surveillance tools, leaving us with more questions than answers. While the recent actions the department has taken to limit the number of officers who can access the Flock database are good, they are simply not enough. We cannot rely solely on the police to deal with this issue. We need city leaders to exercise their authority and pass measures like CCOPS to create a regulatory framework for the use of all police surveillance equipment and software.”

The ACLU of Wisconsin’s written testimony submitted to the Milwaukee Common Council Public Safety & Health Committee is available online at: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/app/uploads/2025/05/ACLU-WI-3.12.26-Comments-PSH.pdf>

Read a coalition letter sent to the Milwaukee Common Council in May 2025, urging implementation of CCOPS here:

<https://www.aclu-wi.org/app/uploads/2025/05/ccopscoalitionletter.pdf>.

This statement is available online at: <https://www.aclu-wi.org/press-releases/aclu-of-wisconsin-supports-common-council-letter-calling-for-police-surveillance-reforms-in-milwaukee/>