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April 12, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Portantino
Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2206
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 210 (Wiener) Automated License Plate Recognition Systems: Use of Data.
Notice of OPPOSITION (As Amended 03/15/21)

Dear Senator Portantino,

The City of Arcata must respectfully oppose Senate Bill 210. This measure would hinder law enforcement access to valuable crime fighting data captured by Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras.

Existing law outlines parameters for use, retention, and auditing functions for agencies who utilize ALPR technologies. Many communities have held public meetings to approve this technology in their jurisdictions and, as required, post their use policies prominently on their agency websites. The same governing bodies should retain authority to direct local retention regulations where necessary.

Ultimately, SB 210 would remove local control over systems that community funds have been invested into. If approved, law enforcement agencies would lose many valuable pieces of information that have historically helped find abducted children, murder suspects, kidnappers, and sex criminals.

The misconception that this technology only matches to existing “hot list” data is a harmful fallacy. There is significant administrative work that goes into reviewing license plate data manually as law enforcement agencies work around the clock to solve crimes happening within our communities.

There also appears to be a misconception that the only way to utilize the data is to enter in specific license plate numbers to find matches; that is not at all accurate. Law enforcement personnel are oftentimes tasked with reviewing data and images from nearby incidents to attempt to match suspect vehicle descriptions or partial plate information relating to criminal activity.

The City of Arcata Police Department (APD) would lose an important crime-fighting tool if this legislation were to pass; a tool that could save lives. The APD’s ALPR system server does not haphazardly share license plate information with other jurisdictions with no regard for privacy.

Likewise, the only license plates from outside of our jurisdiction uploaded into our system are those in which a state or nationwide alert was issued.

The City of Arcata supports accountability on the part of law enforcement agencies concerning police technology and policies, as well as related oversight by local governing bodies. However, we do not support policies that restrict law enforcement agencies from utilizing technologies that would otherwise enhance their ability to prevent criminal activity in the communities they serve.

For these reasons, the City of Arcata opposes SB 210.

Respectfully,



Sofia Pereira, Mayor
City of Arcata

cc:

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