



## Dayton City Commission Meeting

January 31, 2024

Mayor Mims and City Commissioners:

My name is Dr. Rhea Debussy, and my pronouns are she/her. I'm the Director of External Affairs for Equitas Health. As you're likely aware, Equitas Health is a non-profit community health center and one of the largest LGBTQ+ and HIV/AIDS serving healthcare organizations in the country. Each year, we serve tens of thousands of patients in Ohio, Texas, Kentucky, and West Virginia, and since 1984, we have been working to advance "care for all."<sup>1</sup>

I'm here to provide follow-up testimony to you all's December 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. As a reminder of what occurred during that meeting, you all voted to approve a nearly \$1 million expenditure for police surveillance technology, despite documented concerns about how such technology has been used for the systemic overpolicing of marginalized communities.<sup>2</sup> Our agency publicly opposed the allocation of these funds, as previously noted at you all's December 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, and we are here today to express our grave disappointment with the lack of formal community input prior to you all's vote.

As noted by numerous community organizations in the greater Dayton metropolitan area, there are several concerns with such a massive expansion in police surveillance technology, and there are very real concerns related both for the civil rights and civil liberties of people living and working in Dayton.<sup>3</sup> This is especially true, given that you all have officially approved a multi-year contract with Flock, which will now have a presence in the Dayton area through December 2028.<sup>4</sup> As noted by the Brookings Institution, the oversurveillance of communities of color – and *especially* the Black community – has a troubling and well-documented history. Further, such police surveillance technology has been inappropriately used, in recent years, to publicly identify people who have protested against police brutality, as we mentioned during our testimony in early December.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the oversurveillance of members of the LGBTQ+ community has an equally troubling history in our country,<sup>6</sup> and as we also mentioned at that previous meeting, such oversurveillance and overpolicing have contributed to police violence against transgender people,<sup>7</sup> in addition to more frequent rates of police interactions for LGBTQ+ people.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://equitashealth.com/about-us/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wyso.org/news/2023-12-21/dayton-city-commission-approves-police-proposal-to-expand-license-plate-readers>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/dayton-to-vote-tonight-on-major-expansion-of-license-plate-readers-for-police/AVAVJXV7ZBF3TMOTQD7BV5ZJ2E/>

<sup>4</sup> See *supra* note 2.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/police-surveillance-and-facial-recognition-why-data-privacy-is-an-imperative-for-communities-of-color/>

<sup>6</sup> See Douglas Charles' (2015) *Hoover's War on Gays: Exposing the FBI's "Sex Deviates" Program*.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.vox.com/identities/2020/6/23/21295432/police-black-trans-people-violence>

<sup>8</sup> <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/press/lgbq-people-six-times-more-likely-than-general-public-to-be-stopped-by-police/>

In short, investing such a large sum of money for police surveillance technology is deeply troubling, given how such technology is so often used for the systemic overpolicing of marginalized communities. Equitas Health remains disappointed by you all's decision to invest nearly \$1 million into this controversial contract, as these funds could have been directed to other projects of importance to the region. In the future, our agency hopes that you will more actively consider the importance of community input, especially for expenditures that have such serious racial justice and LGBTQ+ justice concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

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