



March 10, 2017

For Immediate Release

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Oakland Privacy Commission Unanimously Endorses Civil Rights Ordinance

Oakland Police Department Conveys Its Strong Support

Oakland-Yesterday evening, the Oakland Privacy Commission unanimously endorsed the Civil Rights Ordinance, a simple yet powerful law that, if enacted, would clarify that Oakland Police Department (“OPD”) officers assigned to the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force (“JTTF”) must follow the same state and local laws that all other OPD officers are bound by, rather than looser and highly problematic FBI guidelines.

Timothy Birch from the OPD’s Office of the Chief was present and conveyed OPD Chief Anne Kirkpatrick’s strong support for the ordinance. Chief Kirkpatrick has now joined the other new Chief to the Bay Area, SFPD’s Chief William Scott, in taking the lead in responding to community concerns on this issue.

“I join the call to keep Trump’s FBI from extending its tentacles into our community. None of us who are familiar with our immediate history can forget the destructive and catastrophic abuses of the FBI’s COINTELPRO activities,” said Pastor Michael McBride, the National Director for the Urban Strategies/LIVE FREE Campaign with the PICO National Network. “Knowing what we know about Trump’s administration, and the vulnerabilities of immigrant communities, religious minorities and First Amendment protestors, we will depend on our local municipalities to shield us from this threat to our constitutional liberties and human dignity.”

“The FBI’s rules allow them to harass and surveil community members, even when the agents know for a fact that the target has done nothing wrong,” said Christina Sinha, a National Security and Civil Rights Staff Attorney at Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus. “We don’t need OPD wasting their time with these kinds of useless inquiries that terrorize our community and make all of us less safe by squandering scarce resources.”

“With this ordinance, Oakland is taking important steps to ensure that OPD is not violating state and local laws by targeting its residents on the basis of their religious or political opinions,” said Brittney Rezaei, Civil Rights Attorney with the Council on American-Islamic Relations of the San Francisco Bay Area. “This demonstrates Oakland’s commitment to protecting the community it serves.”

“More than ever, residents want transparency, accountability, and oversight for police surveillance that disproportionately impacts religious minorities, immigrants, and communities of color,” said Matt Cagle, Technology and Civil Liberties Policy Attorney with the ACLU of Northern California. “This civil rights ordinance, along with Oakland’s proposed surveillance technology ordinance, would provide Oaklanders with important tools for taking control of police surveillance and protecting civil liberties and civil rights.”

“This law would enact long-lasting self-defense mechanisms for Oaklanders to guard against future Trump administration abuses,” said Brian Hofer, Chairperson of the Oakland Privacy Commission. “We appreciate Councilmember McElhane’s leadership in sponsoring this necessary ordinance.”

“It’s critical that local law enforcement agencies take concrete steps to assure all the communities they serve that they will not allow their officers to become entangled in the deeply misguided and dangerous practices of President Trump’s federal law enforcement agencies,” John Crew, Advisor to the Stop TrumpINTELPRO Campaign and former ACLU police practices attorney. “We appreciate Oakland Chief Anne Kirkpatrick’s representative expressing her ‘strong support’ for this proposed ordinance and hope she will inspire other chiefs to follow suit.”

The Privacy Advisory Commission’s endorsement of the ordinance ensures that it will be considered by the Oakland City Council, with a hearing before the Council’s Public Safety Committee within weeks. Councilmember Lynette McElhaney has already agreed to sponsor it.

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