



Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2024

HB 912 - Public Safety - Safe Neighborhoods Pilot Program

UNFAVORABLE

The ACLU of Maryland and the Maryland Office of the Public Defender urge an unfavorable report on HB 912 which would establish a program to provide and install doorbell cameras and security systems in the homes of program applicants. The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services would establish and administer the program, with a focus on high crime areas. It would also require the Office to release a report on program participation and outcomes.

While the bill includes provisions that bar law enforcement from compelling residents to share footage with law enforcement agencies, law enforcement can often bypass resident approval entirely by contacting security providers directly, essentially nullifying this protection. Despite historically refuting claims that footage was handed over to police without a warrant or the owner's approval, Amazon recently admitted that they have, in fact, at numerous times, given law enforcement access to Ring footage without a warrant and without owner's consent in exigent circumstances. The company did not specify what types of circumstances would prompt unilateral release.¹ Given this revelation, the protections in the bill would not be adequate safeguards against misuse and abuse of the program. Additionally, while the bill directs the Office to create regulations that protect user's data as it is stored, much of this is left up to the provider. Current data storage and security practices can leave users vulnerable. These security systems are vulnerable to hacking.² Additionally, recently, several bugs were discovered in Ring camera systems that could have allowed access to

¹ Biddle, S. (2022, July 13). Amazon admits giving ring camera footage to police without a warrant or consent. The Intercept. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://theintercept.com/2022/07/13/amazon-ring-camera-footage-police-ed-markey/>

² Paul, K. (2020, December 23). Dozens Sue Amazon's ring after camera hack leads to threats and racial slurs. The Guardian. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/dec/23/amazon-ring-camera-hack-lawsuit-threats;>

Peterson, H. (2019, September 25). Wisconsin couple describe the chilling moment that a hacker cranked up their heat and started talking to them through a Google Nest camera in their kitchen. Business Insider. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://www.businessinsider.com/hacker-breaks-into-smart-home-google-nest-devices-terrorizes-couple-2019-9>

millions of camera recordings, names, geolocations, and contact information.³ Ring is currently the defendant in two class action lawsuits involving data privacy and storage, including one proposed class action suit alleging the misuse and mishandling of biometric data.⁴

For the foregoing reasons, we urge an unfavorable report on HB 912.

AMERICAN CIVIL
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³ Page, C. (2022, August 18). Amazon's ring quietly fixed security flaw that put users' camera recordings at risk of exposure. TechCrunch. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://techcrunch.com/2022/08/18/amazon-ring-security-risk/>

⁴Hawkins, S. (2022, August 4). Ring loses bid to dismiss biometric claims over doorbell cameras. Bloomberg Law. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/privacy-and-data-security/ring-loses-bid-to-dismiss-biometric-claims-over-doorbell-cameras>; Carrega, C. (2019, December 27). Amazon, Ring face \$5 million proposed class action lawsuit that alleges camera 'vulnerable' to cyber-attacks. ABC News. Retrieved March 6, 2023, from <https://abcnews.go.com/US/amazon-ring-face-million-proposed-class-action-lawsuit/story?id=67948687>