



Thank you to both Chairs and members of the Committees on Technology and Civil Service and Labor for holding this critical hearing.

My name is Cynthia Conti-Cook and I am the Director of Research & Policy at the Collaborative Research Center for Resilience, which the Surveillance Resistance Lab is now a project of.

Over the past year, we have been learning from and empowering union leaders in the public sector whose members are confronting automation and its impact on their working conditions. My comment focuses on Intro 1066.¹

Public sector workers are uniquely on the front-lines of protecting the communities they serve from technologies and policies that empower policing and corporate vendors. This ultimately threatens community well-being and diminishes democratic power. The importance of this role cannot be understated in this moment when the AI industry is combating any attempt to regulate its experimental development.

At the same time, data sharing across massive databases reveals people's relationships, money, and movements and facilitate masked officers to disappear people from our communities. It is in this context of data enabling severe disruption to our communities that we recognize the unique role and responsibility

¹ <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6874682&GUID=0B6A4E8B-4D49-437B-BB70-50B898D2BD7F&Options=&Search=>

of the workers who stand between sensitive government data and function and the forces that seek control over it.

We therefore recommend that the scope of the task force described in Intro 1066 be broadened in three ways:

First, the task force should not be limited to examining strictly “AI” tools but be prepared to evaluate any digital technologies that involve massive data collection, automation or use of large language models.

Second, the task force scope should go beyond impact on workers’ positions but should be more broadly scoped in order to include the impact of these technologies on the quality of the public service, municipal liability, the integrity of constitutional and statutory privacy protections, community access to government workers, public trust in government-provided information, health and safety impacts, and on any impact digital technologies and corporate tech vendors have on local democratic governance, including worker organizing and bargaining power.

Third, the task force scope should additionally recommend avenues for workers to have more power over deciding what tasks should be automated, how technologies are procured, how vendors should be evaluated, how to establish worker protections in contracts, and how to involve workers in contract monitoring with vendors.²

Establishing this task force could be critically important step towards learning from and protecting workers from automation, AI and machine learning systems. We already know that these technologies can impact data privacy, job loss, bias, discrimination, loss of relational freedom, lost wages, contingent work, health and safety impacts, and worker power. As the Labor Center based at the University of Berkeley outlines in their landscape report on tech and work policy³, workers may be subject to a long list of technologies that impacts their work and also their worker power. These technologies include electronic monitoring, algorithmic management, worker data collection, and automation. The report also outlines various state and local bills, including some from NYS and NYC, that address different aspects of the new set of power tools bosses and governments have at their disposal. These approaches include limiting the use of data and surveillance in workplaces, giving workers notice about and consent to reject how their data is used in the workplace, and limiting the tasks that may be automated. The task force

² IEEE recently released its standard for AI procurement for governments which could be used to guide these efforts. <https://spectrum.ieee.org/ieee-ai-3119-standards>

³ <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/tech-and-work-policy-guide/>

should draw from this report and the many avenues workers across the country are experimenting with to mitigate the harms AI introduces.

The scope should also be broad enough to capture concerns we have previously raised about the MyCity portal and how it empowers police and private tech vendors. By outsourcing city services to tech vendors who are disconnected from our communities and not invested in the vitality of the city's future democratic governance, the city threatens government workers' jobs but also all NYC communities.

In March 2024, we laid out how this dynamic has played out in our report on MyCity. We sounded the alarm on the city's over-reliance on tech vendors to build a data portal across multiple agencies. During this committee's hearing in the fall of 2024, we emphasized how vulnerable this expansion of data sharing will make communities to policing—leading to violations of city privacy rules and invasive digital stop and frisks targeting New Yorkers who may never learn about when these violations happen.

While government tech and agency staff may not have gone along with some of the aspects of MyCity, they have not been involved. NY Focus's March 2025 investigative report on MyCity revealed how much of this portal's construction has been outsourced—over \$100 million dollars have been invoiced by over forty tech contractors who do not have deep expertise in the agencies they are changing and are not invested in protecting New York City communities from new forms of surveillance.

Another particular concern about MyCity for workers that might not be included in the scope of 1066 as written includes the plan to track city worker spending data from digital wallets which this administration has indicated intent to pay government workers. Matthew Fraser has previously testified that digital wallets would help the government track how all government-provided money is spent, by benefits recipients and government workers.⁴ This proposed use of technology, for example, should also be within the scope of any worker-focused task force established by Intro 1066.

We already have been warned against automation replacing unionized city workers with deep expertise in the context of MyCity as well. During this committee's hearing on MyCity last fall, Jacob Fallman also testified—I encourage both committees to review his testimony in this context. He is a lawyer from the Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice in Michigan who warned us that

⁴ <https://surveillanceresistancelab.org/featured-work/mycity-inc-a-case-against-compstat-urbanism/> (FN2)

before Michigan’s infamously disastrous Michigan Integrated Data Automated System (MiDAS) program was introduced to automate fraud detection in unemployment benefits, that “Michigan laid off many of its union claims examiners—workers whose jobs had been to manually review claims.”

Thousands of cases flooded the appeals system. “Shockingly, an internal review later found that up to 93% of these cases were false accusations.” People were falsely charged with crimes, had wages and tax returns garnished, and the state had to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in the lawsuits that followed. This example illustrates why, for example in 1066, we recommend the scope of the task force is broadened to evaluate AI’s impact beyond workers’ positions in the agency.

The scope of 1066 should also include the impact of automation on workers’ communities. A recent report estimates that over 92 million low income people in the United States are subjected to decision-making by unreliable automated systems.⁵ The author of the report, Kevin de Liban, also testified at the MyCity hearing last fall to share the cautionary tales he has gathered about automation of social safety net services across the country and I refer the Council to his prior testimony.

Women and Black communities are uniquely impact by increased automation of public sector work. In a 2023 report jointly authored by In the Public Interest and Local Progress, the authors emphasized how important public sector jobs are to women and Black communities in particular. “The public sector is the third largest employer of women, regardless of race. In 2019, women made up fully 60 percent of all state and local public-sector workers.”⁶ Black women in particular are impacted by job displacement in government—“As of 2019, 48 percent of all Black women in the workforce were employed by state and local governments.” Losing these jobs would impact these families, households, and communities and their access to people who are conduits to safety net services and trusted navigators of local government from their neighborhoods.

While there are surely discreet contexts in which the extremely resource-heavy systems of automation and AI may be worthwhile, those circumstances must be carefully vetted by workers with deep roots in the communities they serve and decades of deep expertise in the specific functioning of the agencies they work with and the contexts and purposes for which technology is deployed.

⁵ <https://www.techtonicjustice.org/reports/inescapable-ai>

⁶ <https://inthepublicinterest.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/0723-ITPI-Procurement.pdf>

One way to intervene in the seizure of power that introducing AI into a workplace threatens is by establishing a worker board for co-governance of AI uses. Recently, union leaders from SEIU 668 in Pennsylvania led by President Steve Catanese bargained a side agreement with Governor Shapiro that both protects union jobs and explicitly acknowledges the unique role that public sector workers play in protecting the quality of government services for their communities.⁷

The agreement established co-governance over use of AI through the creation of a worker board to evaluate uses of AI, it defined a public worker as a person and genAI as a tool, it characterized the use of AI in government services as an experiment, emphasized the need for strong human-in-the-loop protections at every step, and ensured monitoring of disparate impacts related to bias and discrimination of protected classes.

We encourage the Committees to examine the SEIU-668 side agreement and consider using it as a floor to build off of and to broaden the scope and the tasks imagined in 1066.

Thank you for the invitation to testify and for calling this important hearing.

⁷ <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/governor/documents/2025.3.21%20gov%20shapiro%20letter%20on%20ai%20and%20employees.pdf>