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**Joint Testimony by
Surveillance Resistance Lab and
the Street Vendor Project**

New York City Hearing with the Committee on Technology
Committee on Public Safety and the Committee on
Oversight and Investigations on Oversight and Legislation:
Examining NYPD's Implementation of the POST Act

February 19, 2025 at 10 am at
Committee Room - City Hall

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Thank you to the Chairs, and members of all the committees, for holding this public hearing and allowing us the opportunity to share our concerns about the NYPD's widespread use of technologies, data and personnel through other city agencies to surveil New Yorkers and attempt to avoid mandatory reporting requirements. I present this testimony today jointly on behalf of both the Surveillance Resistance Lab and the Street Vendor Project.

The Surveillance Resistance Lab investigates how the expansion of corporate technology solutions in government (data collection, AI, chatbots, etc.) can undermine democratic engagement and civic space, as well as cause real harm to communities reliant on government services and on accurate information from government communications.

The Street Vendor Project is a membership-based organization of over 3,000 street vendors working together to create a movement of vendors for permanent change across the city.

We testify jointly today to bring attention to technologies used by the NYPD to surveil New Yorkers through coordination with other agencies – with a specific focus on how this impacts street vendors, many of whom are immigrants.

We testify today to emphasize how street vendor policing through cross agency data and personnel sharing raises questions about additional unreported surveillance technologies used by the NYPD, unlawful profiling and what is now obviously dangerous mapping of immigrant communities.

This echoes what many Black and Latino New Yorkers have experienced from decades of intense broken windows policing and stop and frisk. What lurked beneath the surface of the “quality of life” policing goals was also data collection and community mapping by police. A similar iceberg lurks beneath the surface today with street vendors policing and mapping immigrant communities.

In spite of the reporting required by the POST Act, the NYPD fails to report the many mechanisms through which it surveils New Yorkers by collecting information about them. This is especially true of the data collected on low income or disabled New Yorkers from immigrant, Black, and other communities of color who rely on city services as well as those who survive financially as street vendors.

We ask that the City Council mandate the NYPD to report the full breadth of technologies NYPD uses to surveil, including technologies and data it has access to through other agencies plus city and state task forces, so that they may also be publicly debated.

While the POST Act defines surveillance technology as technology “that is operated by or at the direction of the department,” the NYPD narrowly interprets this to exclude the increasing number of data sharing technologies used to gather information from other city agencies involved in policing and surveilling New Yorkers—none of these systems are reported on by the NYPD.

It is increasingly critical that the NYPD include the data sharing technologies the agency relies on as it escalates cross-agency efforts to utilize peace officers operating within traditionally civilian agency to enforce city rules and regulations. For example, the policing arms of the Department of Sanitation and Parks Department are increasingly utilized in operations that target street vendors across the City.

Today we call attention to the data sharing practices across multiple agencies including the NYPD, the Department of Sanitation, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Parks Department, and more.

As we heard during the hearing, through task force MOUs, data becomes accessible to all members of the task force. **While the NYPD may not collect data for federal civil immigration policing, the Community Link task force that includes the NYPD is absolutely targeting immigrants for data collection through street vendor policing.**

As an example, the NYPD’s Operation Restore Roosevelt was launched in October 2024 through the Mayor’s Community Link initiative. Community Link is described on its [website](#) as “A Multi Agency Response for Quality-Of-Life Issues.” It promises to “to help address complex and often chronic community complaints that require a multi-agency response.” And yet in January 2025, when the Mayor [announced](#) the results of having 20 city agencies working together, the outcomes were limited to arrests, summonses, and seizure of property.

In other words, Operation Restore Roosevelt relied on resources from 20 various city agencies to carry out a policing project. It is policing but with a different name. Rather than addressing the causes of the “quality of life” conditions in their complexity for all, as promised, Operation Restore Roosevelt proved to only produce a harmful police response.

Cross agency collaborations like Community Link allow the NYPD to access a vast array of technologies to surveil New Yorkers and yet they fail to identify them in POST Act reporting. On the Lab’s website you can find more information about the [Digital Cop City iceberg](#)—it maps how digital data collection and sharing infrastructure hidden beneath the surface expands the power of the NYPD and corporations in the city.

Beyond data sharing, it also allows the NYPD to control a large number of peace officers who are not beholden to NYPD accountability and oversight mechanisms. Citywide, there are approximately [250 Parks Enforcement Police](#) (PEP) and [40 Department of Sanitation Police](#) (DSNYP) operating as Peace Officers, both with a duty to ‘enforce street vending.’ In 2024, the NYPD Deputy Inspector Timothy Wilson was assigned as “Chief of Enforcement” at Parks to lead the PEP—part of a larger initiative to place NYPD officials into local government agencies.

Yet there are little to no accountability measures for the Parks Enforcement Police and Department of Sanitation Police. The Civilian Complaints Review Board’s purview extends only to the NYPD—in order to report a complaint against PEP, one must submit a complaint to the NYC Parks Department directly, and similarly complaints against the DSNY Police must be made to the Department of Sanitation Inspector General.

Not surprisingly, Operation Restore Roosevelt has not improved the quality of life equitably for the diverse communities that call Jackson Heights and Corona home. Laura Torlaschi, a Queens-based writer and sex work advocate for DecrimNY, punctured the PR campaign of Community Link as a cross-agency effort by asking in an [op-ed](#): “what happens after the cops?” So far, beyond policing, the community has not seen anything.

Contrary to action that would actually distribute supportive social services to residents of Jackson Heights, other members of City Council have called for the creation of a [portal](#) through the Office of Street Vendor Enforcement (OSVE) “that would allow all agencies enforcing street vending laws and regulations to share enforcement-related information.” These data-sharing technologies must also be included in POST Act reporting because they too are surveillance technologies used by the NYPD. This becomes all the more critical if the City capitulates to federal immigration policing.

The purpose and extent of data sharing between police and all other agencies through initiatives like Community Link but also through new technologies—such as those adopted by New York public schools, , benefits portals like MyCity, the sanitation Trash Dash, and citywide data sharing systems like Worker Connect—should all be publicly reported and debated.