



PRESS STATEMENT

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Vignarajah issues qualified statement in support of Board of Estimates approval of Aerial Surveillance

BALTIMORE, April 1, 2020

Earlier this morning, the Board of Estimates voted to approve the aerial surveillance program, with three 'yes' votes, and Council President Brandon Scott and Comptroller Joan Pratt using the Mayor's majority as cover to not support the program. Former prosecutor and Maryland Deputy Attorney General Thiru Vignarajah, who has long advocated for the 'Eye in the Sky' program criticized the political games that have delayed this approval and continue to hamstring the project.

Vignarajah made three remarks about today's vote:

"It is sad to see the Council President playing politics with people's lives. We're all going to regret that he only made the draft legal agreement public the night before the vote, and only after we demanded it. Now he can complain for years while he did his best to sabotage a promising tool."

"I continue to believe a warrant requirement is essential to safeguard the community's privacy and the constitutional rights of everyone in Baltimore. That is not included right now. It is something that could have been easily corrected if the public had more than 12 hours to see that it wasn't in there. I urge BPD and prosecutors to use this valuable tool in a constitutionally responsible way."

"The police commissioner was right to shoot down the Council President's ironic claim that the program didn't work in 2016 when he was chair of public safety. Back then, the police department secretly launched this program with no public input, no limits, no record keeping, no methodology,

and no data analysis. Commissioner Harrison couldn't do anything about that, he was in New Orleans — Council President Scott could have, he just didn't.”

Even before he announced his candidacy, Vignarajah was first to call for the use of aerial surveillance with appropriate constitutional checks and public support. [Find his op-ed here.](#)

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