

OFFICIAL MaCCNO STATEMENT: New ABO/Surveillance Ordinance Puts Communities, Cultural Businesses at Risk

Over the past year, MaCCNO has been very vocal about our opposition to the \$40 Million 'Public Safety Improvements Plan' first unveiled in January. Stacy Head's new ordinance, introduced on the first of December, incorporates some of the worst features of that plan, including requiring all 1,500 alcoholic beverage outlets (ABOs) in New Orleans to install surveillance cameras for round the clock monitoring by the NOPD and the federal government.

Councilmember Head has once again introduced legislation that would create lasting damage to New Orleans culture and communities, this time at the request of Mayor Landrieu. The radical regulatory changes which advance widespread surveillance and drastically weaken protections for businesses against nuisance complaints have been buried in this 22 page ordinance and were only discovered under careful examination. It is particularly troubling that the Head/Landrieu ordinance was introduced under the cover of the holidays, when people are least likely to be paying attention; just like the Noise Ordinance we protested four years ago. The residents of New Orleans deserve transparency and accountability from our political leadership. Policies with such widespread implications should not be introduced by a term limited Councilperson, at the request of a lame duck Mayor, and voted on by an outgoing City Council that would largely avoid any political repercussions.

New Orleans, with some of the highest incarceration rates in the world, has finally taken much needed steps towards criminal justice reform. Under the federal consent decree the NOPD has made strong progress in how they treat our cultural traditions and our citizens. The Head/Landrieu ordinance is a massive step backwards: everyone who wants to have a drink, every musician headed to or from a gig, every parent picking up a prescription at a pharmacy, will be surveilled as a potential criminal. Even more egregiously, this ordinance allows the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI full access to the footage; agencies that under the Trump administration are clearly targeting activists, immigrants, and communities of color. New Orleans should be doubling down on protections for its residents and investing in addressing the root causes of crime, not opening up new pathways to persecution.

Small business owners should be deeply concerned about this ordinance. Not only will they be forced to install cameras that will allow the city and federal government to watch their business at all times—and continuously collect evidence that can be used against them if the City so chooses—there is another poison pill that would put a target on all 1,500 ABOs in the city. The Head/Landrieu ordinance would dramatically lower the threshold for complaints against businesses; five written complaints from any resident or property owner *within a half mile* could cause the

loss of their ABO license. The rapid rate of speculative development, and particularly the spread of AirBnB, make this system ripe for abuse. The owners of an AirBnB in Treme have guests complaining about “those people” hanging out outside the corner bar? A few complaints and the bar is in trouble. A developer who’s considering a new condo development in St Roch, but the owners of the corner store won’t sell their family business? 5 complaints from a friend in the Marigny could be all it takes to change that. This is an aggressively pro-gentrification ordinance and presents a clear and present danger to every small grocery, pharmacy, bar, and music venue in the city.

Crime continues to be a real problem in New Orleans, but criminalizing citizens and closing neighborhood businesses is not the solution. This ordinance could be up for a vote at City Council as early as Thursday, December 14. Please contact all City Council members and tell them you oppose Ordinance 32,107, the requirement for surveillance cameras in all ABOs, and the radical expansion of the complaint system.

In addition, there is a petition opposing cameras in ABO’s here:
<http://bit.ly/2AbWNV7>

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