

Community Statement from the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office regarding Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) & Flock Public Safety Technology

The Tompkins County Sheriff's Office is committed to being professional, transparent, and community-focused in every tool we use to enhance public safety. We understand that new technology raises important questions. We welcome those conversations and want to address concerns directly and factually regarding our use of public safety technology provided by Flock Safety.

Our office uses License Plate Reader (LPR) technology strictly as an investigative tool to assist in solving serious crimes, locating missing persons, and recovering stolen vehicles. It is not used for general surveillance or routine traffic enforcement.

License Plate Reader (LPR) technology is not new. In fact, in-car LPR systems have been used in patrol vehicles for decades. These systems scan passing license plates and instantly check them against law enforcement databases to provide information about a vehicle's registration status and registered owner.

GIVE Grant Funding & Measurable Results

The implementation of this technology began in 2023, with funding from New York State's Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative. The GIVE program is administered by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services and directed at communities identified by New York State as experiencing significant gun violence challenges.

The grant application was a collaborative process involving our office, the District Attorney's Office, the Probation Department, and the Ithaca Police Department. The funds (totaling \$383,000 in the first year alone) and information regarding their intended use were approved and accepted by the Tompkins County Legislature in public meetings since the beginning.

New York State identified the City of Ithaca as having a gun crime issue, making our community eligible for GIVE funding. The grant was a collaborative effort among local criminal justice partners to address gun-involved violence with evidence-based strategies. NYS labeled the City of Ithaca as a GIVE Tier II agency along with Amherst, Auburn, Binghamton, Cheektowaga, Elmira, Greece, Jamestown, Kingston, Lackawanna, Middletown, Spring Valley, and Watertown.

Our office originally managed the GIVE grant and turned it over to the Ithaca Police Department, for whom it was intended, in 2024.

Through GIVE funding, we were able to conduct targeted patrols and hotspot policing activities, as well as deploy Flock License Plate Readers (LPR) and Flock Raven gunshot detection devices as part of a focused violence reduction strategy.

Flock is not a new technology, and according to them, they have over 12,000 public safety customers across the nation.

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In the first year alone, our GIVE work netted **12 violation charges, 112 misdemeanor charges, and 50 felonies**. We recovered **20 illegally possessed firearms, 5 other weapons**, and removed from the streets of Ithaca **365 grams of methamphetamine, 10.3 ounces of cocaine, 30 grams of Heroin/Fentanyl, 11 grams of psilocybin mushrooms**, and **40 various narcotic pills**. A total of **\$12,608** in suspected drug money was also seized. Most of the defendants involved are now serving prison time.

Much of the crime our community experienced was gang-related and involved narcotics trafficking and gun violence that always follows it. Perpetrators often came into Ithaca from other jurisdictions to take part in such activities. This is the reason LPR's were placed where they were, to capture criminals entering Tompkins County and the City of Ithaca to harm our community.

Since implementation, our community has seen measurable reductions in gun-related incidents and improved investigative outcomes. GIVE work, and these tools have helped:

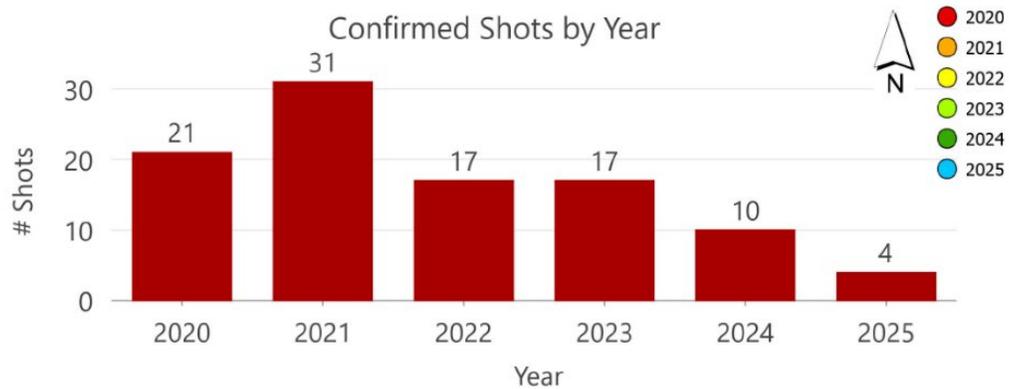
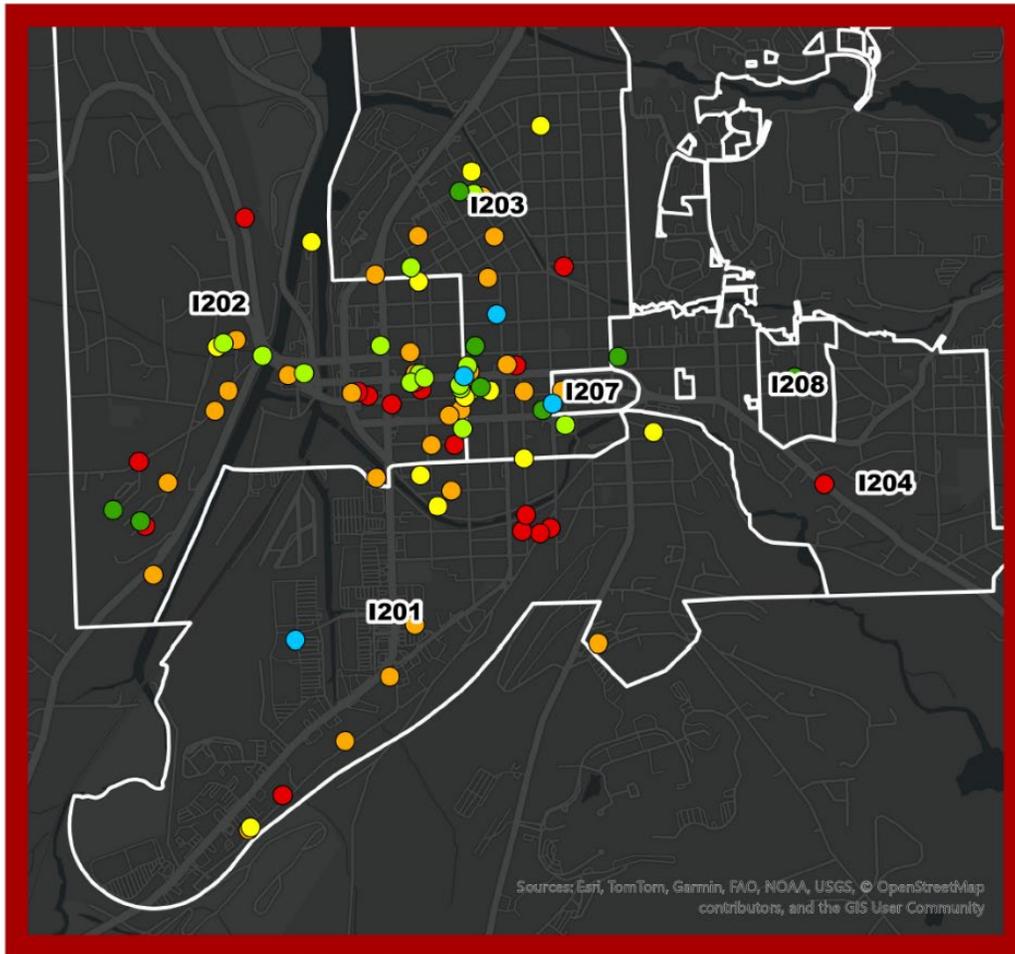
- Identify suspect vehicles quickly
- Locate stolen vehicles
- Support faster response times
- Strengthening collaborative investigations among partner agencies
- Provide a visual deterrence to major crime

These results reflect a coordinated, data-driven public safety strategy, not a broad surveillance effort. Law-abiding community members going about their daily lives are not impacted by Flock. Their vehicle information is not actively monitored, and it is highly unlikely that a vehicle image would ever be viewed by law enforcement unless it is directly connected to a reported crime.

During our Reimagining Public Safety efforts, many community members called for innovative approaches that reduce the need for direct armed response whenever possible. Flock License Plate Reader (LPR) technology supports that goal. By providing real-time investigative information, it allows deputies to make informed decisions, respond more strategically, and in some cases, resolve incidents without escalating encounters.

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2020-2025 Confirmed Shots Fired - City of Ithaca, NY



Created & provided by our partners at the Ithaca Police Department

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Addressing Community Concerns

1. "Why does the Sheriff's Office need Flock technology?"

The Sheriff's Office patrols nearly 500 square miles, a county geographically divided by Cayuga Lake and consisting largely of rural and suburban communities outside the City of Ithaca. On an average shift, only 3–4 deputies are assigned to cover that entire area.

Certain calls for service require multiple deputies. A domestic violence incident mandates two officers. A major incident can require all available patrol units. When that occurs, some patrol zones may not see a deputy for an entire shift. Patrol coverage is not always equitable, and response times (particularly in our rural areas) can be significant.

Many of our initial GIVE activities were overtime funded through the grant. For a small agency, solving crime problems through overtime alone is unsustainable.

Flock LPR's serve as a force multiplier. They extend the reach of limited staffing and provide real-time investigative leads at a fraction of the cost of adding personnel positions. This technology helps close gaps created by geography and staffing realities.

Criminal activity does not stop at jurisdictional lines. Individuals committing crimes in the City of Ithaca travel through the county to get there. Many enter Tompkins County from neighboring jurisdictions. Strategic placement of Flock LPRs throughout the County ensures coverage that benefits every law enforcement agency serving our residents.

Flock LPRs in Tompkins County are deployed to serve all local law enforcement agency investigations. Without this shared technology, each agency's ability to investigate crimes would be significantly limited.

In addition to the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office, agencies holding Flock contracts and operating devices within Tompkins County include:

- Village of Cayuga Heights Police Department
- City of Ithaca Police Department
- Village of Trumansburg Police Department
- Cornell University Police Department
- Ithaca College Public Safety
- Village of Groton Police Department

This collaborative, countywide approach strengthens public safety for every community we serve.

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2. "The data isn't secure."

Flock's system uses encrypted cloud-based storage that meets Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) security standards. Access is:

- Restricted to authorized personnel only
- Logged and audited
- Searchable only for legitimate law enforcement purposes
- Automatically deleted after a fixed retention period (typically 30 days, unless tied to an active investigation)

Every search conducted by our office is attributable to a specific user, case number, and approved search type. The required search reasons in the approved dropdown list coincide with the NYS Penal Law. Every search is recorded. There is no anonymous access. Misuse is detectable and traceable.

Every piece of data collected by Flock LPR's is owned and controlled by the customer, whether that customer is a city, county, or educational institution. The decision about whether, when, and how data is shared is made by the customer that owns the data, not by Flock.

3. "Information will be shared with or accessed by ICE."

The Tompkins County Sheriff's Office does not partake in immigration enforcement activities. We do not use LPR data for immigration enforcement, and we do not conduct searches for immigration enforcement agencies, either directly or indirectly.

Access to our system is limited to Tompkins County area law enforcement agencies and our regional Crime Analysis Center (CAC), and only when investigating specific criminal cases. The system is not open for general federal data mining. We comply with New York State law and established county policy regarding cooperation with federal authorities. Our office follows our local sanctuary policy.

If an outside law enforcement agency requests assistance with an investigation, they must contact our office directly. All requests are carefully reviewed to ensure they comply with our established policies and legal standards. Any approved search is conducted using the same tracking, documentation, and oversight procedures required for our own investigations.

New York State's Green Light Law allows eligible residents, regardless of immigration status, to obtain a driver's license without requiring proof of U.S. citizenship, and it restricts federal immigration authorities' access to DMV records without a judicial warrant. As a result, Flock Safety LPR devices, which capture only license plate images on public roadways and are not tied to DMV databases, are not a viable or practical tool for immigration enforcement.

Flock itself does not partner with ICE. ICE does not have direct access to Flock LPR's, systems, or data. There is no hidden back door access to Flock technology.

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The Flock settings established by our office do not permit the federal government to submit direct access or search requests through the system. In addition, immigration-related search filters are enabled, which prevents any agency from using our data for immigration enforcement purposes. These safeguards are intentional and reinforce our commitment to using this technology strictly for legitimate public safety investigations involving reported crimes.

TCSO's policy regarding immigration enforcement can be found by clicking here:

[1442731](#)

4. "A deputy could misuse the system."

Any law enforcement database is only as ethical as the policies governing it. That is why:

- Every search is logged and auditable
- Supervisory oversight is in place
- Unauthorized use is a policy violation subject to discipline, up to and including termination and possible criminal charges
- Training is required before obtaining access rights
- Improper use would leave a permanent digital trail. Accountability is built into our use.
- Overly broad search types, such as "investigation" or "surveillance," are not permissible or included in the approved search type list.

5. "It can be used against those seeking access to reproductive care."

Our office does not use license plate reader (LPR) technology to target individuals seeking lawful medical care, including reproductive healthcare services. Reproductive care, including abortion, is legal in New York State and is not a crime.

We do not provide LPR access to law enforcement agencies outside of Tompkins County. Regardless of where a patient resides, receiving lawful medical care in New York State is a protected activity, and another State cannot punish an activity that occurred outside its own State.

The system is used in the investigation of defined criminal conduct, such as violent crimes, missing persons cases, and stolen vehicles. It is not a tool for monitoring personal decisions, lawful protests, or constitutionally protected activity.

As with immigration, reproductive healthcare-related filters are enabled within our system. These safeguards prevent any agency from using our data to search for or investigate individuals seeking lawful reproductive healthcare services. This ensures the technology is not used in a manner inconsistent with New York State law or our mission.

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6. "This is mass surveillance."

Flock LPR devices do not:

- Record video
- Use facial recognition
- Capture information about drivers or passengers
- Track individuals by name

The system captures still images of license plates and limited vehicle characteristics from public roadways, areas already visible to anyone in the public. It does not record video, track movements in real time, or "follow" individuals. Alerts are generated only when a license plate associated with a reported crime or public safety concern enters the LPR's field of view.

This technology functions as an objective digital investigative lead tool, not a system for monitoring everyday movement. Potential evidence captured by a Flock device is only one part of building an investigative case.

7. "Flock Raven gunshot detection devices listen to or record conversations."

Flock Raven is an acoustic gunshot detection system designed to identify the sound signature of gunfire. It is not a surveillance microphone network.

The system:

- Detects impulsive sounds with specific acoustic thresholds consistent with gunfire
- Does not record or store conversations
- Does not use voice recognition
- Does not transcribe speech

These tools exist for one reason: to protect people. Their purpose is rapid response to potential gunfire so first responders can reach victims faster and secure scenes safely, not to monitor private speech. They are deployed only within the City of Ithaca (where the greatest risk exists) and were installed to enhance safety around Ithaca City Schools. Integrated with license plate readers, they help officers quickly assess situations and identify vehicles potentially connected to a reported incident. The Raven devices triangulate sound detection, providing pinpoint accuracy as to the shot location. The gunshot detection devices and license plate readers work together to help prevent and solve crime.

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8. "It tracks vehicle speed, unregistered vehicles, or other traffic infractions."

Flock LPR devices used by our office:

- Do not measure or calculate vehicle speed
- Are not radar devices
- Do not issue traffic tickets
- Are not red-light cameras
- Are not automated traffic enforcement systems
- Can't detect if your driver's license is valid or not.

Flock LPR's are not programmed for routine traffic enforcement. The system generates alerts only when a license plate has been entered into a database associated with a specific criminal investigation, such as a stolen vehicle, a wanted suspect, or a missing person case. It is not scanning for minor traffic violations or infractions.

9. "Why does there need to be a data retention period for Flock data?"

Outside the visible deterrence that Flock devices provide, most law enforcement responses are retroactive. Quite often, we do not learn about a crime for some time after it has occurred. This could be due to a lack of its discovery, timeliness in reporting it, our own response time, when tips may come in, and how long an investigation may take to pursue. Our office currently retains Flock data for 30 days. We feel this is the most practical and safest period for retention.

Unless an LPR image is associated with a relevant investigation, the image(s) are automatically deleted after 30 days. Some have mentioned 3-minute or 3-day retention periods. Although our office sets our retention period, such time frames would be entirely impractical and would severely inhibit investigations.

10. Why hasn't the Sheriff's Office released to the public a map of where Flock devices are located?

Some community members have already taken steps to create and distribute a map identifying LPR locations. It is unclear to our office how publishing such information benefits public safety. Criminals regularly travel into our City and County to commit crimes that harm our residents. Providing individuals with illicit intent a roadmap to avoid detection is counterproductive and may undermine the very safety efforts designed to protect our community.

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Our Results

The successes we have seen under the GIVE initiative demonstrate that focused, accountable technology, combined with strong partnerships, can reduce violence and improve safety without compromising civil liberties. We have only experienced positive results thus far and have had zero issues.

With only a portion of our LPR's in place, we have already utilized Flock in the following ways (these are only TCSO investigations and do not include successes of other Tompkins County law enforcement agencies):

- **09/01/25 - T/Lansing**
 - Located a missing 92-year-old man from Cortland County suffering from dementia.
- **09/23/25 - C/Ithaca**
 - Apprehended a stolen vehicle and a stabbing suspect from Rochester, NY.
- **10/08/25 - T/Dryden**
 - Identified & located a homicide suspect from Cortland County.
- **10/02/25 - T/Groton**
 - Identified two suspects involved in 7 smash & grab larcenies from local trail heads who are wanted across multiple counties.
- **12/31/25 - C/Ithaca**
 - Captured a fugitive from justice from North Carolina operating a stolen vehicle.
- **01/05/26 - Tompkins Co.**
 - Captured a suspect involved in a multi-county burglary spree impacting approximately 25 victims/families and recovered thousands of dollars in stolen property.

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One resident's comment was recently shared with our office,

“5 years ago, it was terrible on this road. I was sitting outside at my fire pit. When 2 cars raced down the road shooting at each other, there was a shooting at a house next to my friend’s house. They accidentally shot her house up because they had the wrong house. They were looking for a gun in the ditch by my house and there was a gun found down the road 2 different times I believe. The last 2 years it has been completely quiet on my street. It is like it was years ago silent. So what changed? The cameras or the people of interest. Or both.”

And another:

“I walk a lot in the xxx Rd area and a few years ago I got too scared to do that. We were having multiple incidence of gun shots. One even went into the upstairs apartment of the house we live in. We had an incident of a 12 year old finding a loaded gun along the road, which could have been a disaster but luckily ended with the police being called. We have one of the flock cameras almost across from our home and are happy to have it. We believe it has helped our neighborhood be more safe.”

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Additional Resources

The Sheriff's Office includes a Flock Safety portal on our transparency hub located at:

[Flock Safety - Tompkins County NY Sheriff's Office Transparency Portal](#)

By accessing our Flock portal, anyone can view how many searches have been conducted, our number of hotlist hits, verify who we provide access to, our acceptable and prohibited use policies, and some of the successes we have experienced in a very short time. Cases that would not have been solved without Flock Safety. You can also run your own public search audit.

For additional information regarding Flock policies, please see the links below:

<https://www.flocksafety.com/legal/privacy-policy>

<https://www.flocksafety.com/legal/lpr-policy>

<https://www.flocksafety.com/privacy-ethics>

<https://www.flocksafety.com/trust-center>

<https://www.security.flocksafety.com>

<https://www.flocksafety.com/legal>

Conclusion

Public trust is essential to effective law enforcement. We use public safety technology carefully, lawfully, and transparently, and with limited retention and strict accountability.

Our mission remains clear: protect victims, prevent crime, and serve the residents of Tompkins County with integrity.

It is our opinion that GIVE and Flock Safety have had a huge impact on public safety in both the City of Ithaca and Tompkins County. Eliminating such an investigative tool would be a huge mistake.

Attached:

Letter of Support – National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)

Letter of Support – Mother's Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

Letter of Support – Oakland NAACP



June 7, 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to express our support for the partnership between the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) and Flock Safety.

Since its founding in 1984, NCMEC has been dedicated to protecting children and providing critical assistance to families in crisis. The partnership with Flock Safety, established in May 2021, has been instrumental in enhancing our capabilities. By utilizing technology like Flock's License Plate Recognition (LPR) camera system, we have seen remarkable results. Over 100 missing children cases have been resolved thanks to the swift action enabled by this technology.

Statistics show that 74% of AMBER Alert cases are resolved within six hours, and 93% within 24 hours. These numbers highlight the critical importance of timely intervention. The LPR cameras deployed by Flock Safety help provide law enforcement with the tools necessary to act quickly and efficiently. The successful recoveries, such as the safe return of two children in Wichita, KS, and a 14-year-old girl in Casper, WY, underscore the life-saving impact of this technology and our partnership.

NCMEC remains steadfast in our mission to assist law enforcement to recover missing children. We are grateful for the collaboration with Flock Safety and are confident that together, we will continue to make our communities safer and reunite children with their families.

Thank you for your continued support of our efforts. Together, we can make sure that every child has a safe childhood.

Sincerely,
John E. Bischoff III
VP, Missing Children Division
National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

333 John Carlyle Street Suite 125 | Alexandria, VA 22314
1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678) | ncmec.org



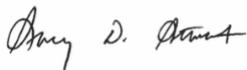
May 9, 2025

At Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), we recognize that innovative technologies can make a meaningful difference. While MADD does not endorse or promote any specific technology product or service, MADD acknowledges the crucial role technology plays in increasing overall safety and ultimately furthering our mission to end impaired driving. We understand that Flock Safety provides license plate recognition technology, allowing law enforcement to accurately and timely identify vehicles involved in incidents such as hit-and-run crashes. We believe that any technology that increases post-crash responsiveness and accountability will help to raise awareness and change behaviors to avoid impaired driving.

Impaired driving remains one of the most preventable causes of death and injury in the United States. Yet, it continues to claim thousands of lives each year. We can progress toward safer roads through collaborative efforts, including partnerships among technology providers, law enforcement, and community leaders.

We appreciate Flock Safety's commitment to supporting public safety initiatives and working alongside communities to strengthen preventive strategies. We also appreciate Flock Safety's support of MADD and helping us dedicate more resources to our mission to end impaired driving, support victims and survivors of these crimes, and prevent underage drinking and drug use.

Sincerely,



Stacey Stewart
Chief Executive Officer



To Whom It May Concern:

The Oakland Branch of the NAACP writes today in strong support of the continued and expanded use of Flock Safety's License Plate Recognition (LPR) cameras in our city.

In a moment when our communities are demanding both public safety and equitable justice, Flock Safety's LPR technology offers a powerful tool to reduce bias in policing. These cameras are designed to detect only vehicles associated with a crime, removing the subjective judgment that too often leads to disproportionate stops and harmful interactions with Black and Brown residents. It is a clear example of how technology can support safer, fairer policing.

With the Oakland Police Department facing ongoing staffing shortages, Flock LPR cameras act as a force multiplier. Instead of pulling officers away from communities to complete paperwork or review footage, these systems provide real-time alerts that help law enforcement act swiftly and efficiently, allowing more officers to remain out in the community where they are most needed.

The impact is real and measurable. LPRs have already shown proven success in addressing a wide range of serious issues in our city, including human trafficking, illegal dumping, sideshows, and the epidemic of auto theft.

Human trafficking is an area of particular concern. Alameda County was ranked as the third highest hot spot for human trafficking in the country, with 61% of those human trafficking victims being African American.¹ The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), which runs the nation's Amber Alert program, has also endorsed Flock Safety, saying,

"The partnership with Flock Safety, established in May 2021, has been instrumental in enhancing our capabilities. By utilizing technology like Flock's License Plate Recognition (LPR) camera system, we have seen remarkable results. Over 100 missing children cases have been resolved thanks to the swift action enabled by this technology."

¹ **Alameda County Board of Supervisors**, *Proclamation recognizing National Human Trafficking Prevention Month*, January 24, 2023, Alameda County Board of Supervisors, PDF file, accessed June 19, 2025, https://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/DocsAgendaReg_01_24_23/PROCLAMATIONS_COMMENDATIONS/President%20Miley_343736.pdf.

Just across the Bay, San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie recently credited Flock with helping to reduce auto thefts by 41% in a single year, while also increasing arrests for those crimes by 46%. Oakland deserves those same results. We must not allow outdated narratives or political posturing to undermine tools that save lives and protect our neighborhoods. Our community cannot afford to wait.

We urge the Council to stand on the side of justice, equity, and results by supporting Flock LPR technology in Oakland.

On Behalf of the NAACP Oakland Branch 1051,

Cynthia Adams

President
NAACP Oakland Branch 1051