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September 13, 2026

Pender County Board of Commissioners
805 S. Walker Street
Burgaw, NC 28425

Re: Ending Pender County's Flock automated license-plate-reader (ALPR) program

Dear Chairman Randy Burton, Vice-Chairman Brent Springer, and Members of the Board of Commissioners:

We write on behalf of DeFlockILM and the 3,962 residents who have signed our petition to remove Flock automated license-plate-reader (ALPR) cameras from the Cape Fear region. Of those signers, 244 live in Pender County — your constituents — and 2,971, three in every four, live across the five counties of the Cape Fear. They are asking you to end this county's support for mass government surveillance.

In Pender County, the Flock system is operated by Sheriff Alan Cutler's office and paid for out of the county budget this Board adopts. The Sheriff answers to the voters; the appropriation answers to you. As the body that funds the program, you hold both the authority and the responsibility to bring it to an end.

These cameras were deployed without a stand-alone public vote and without any meaningful opportunity for residents to be heard. In Pender the program arrived the quiet way — funded on a consent agenda in January 2025, approved in a single block alongside routine purchases, with no announced debate. Most people learned they were being tracked only after the network was already watching them. That is not how a free community consents to being surveilled, and our neighbors experience it as exactly what it is — a breach of trust.

They also believe it violates their constitutional rights. A network that photographs and logs every passing vehicle — every driver, every day, with no warrant and no suspicion of wrongdoing — is a general search of the innocent. The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States protects against unreasonable searches, and Article I, Section 20 of the Constitution of North Carolina declares that general warrants "are dangerous to liberty and shall not be granted." A permanent, searchable record of where free people travel is the modern general warrant our State Constitution was written to forbid.

Our neighbors keep returning to one plain question: if we are not doing anything wrong, why are you watching us? These systems turn the presumption of innocence on its head. They treat every resident as a suspect to be logged first and cleared later — the opposite of the individualized suspicion that law enforcement is meant to require. A community is not a lineup.

In Pender, the record is especially stark. The county's own Network Audit shows Pender's cameras were searched more than two million times in a single quarter — with the Sheriff's Office itself accounting for only 1,149 of those searches — and the office has redacted the name of every outside agency that ran the rest. Residents are paying for a system and are not permitted to know who is using it.

This is not a distant debate. On September 8, the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners voted 4–0 to cancel its Flock contract, after residents from across the political spectrum asked their government not to track them without a warrant. What was possible one county over is possible here.

Ending a warrantless tracking program is not being soft on crime. It is insisting that public safety and constitutional liberty are not opposites — and honoring the oath you took, as an elected official, to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of North Carolina. A government that watches everyone in order to catch anyone forfeits the consent it depends upon.

We ask you to end Pender County's automated license-plate-reader program — to decline to fund or renew the Flock contract — and to require a recorded public vote before the county acquires any surveillance technology in the future.

The residents on our petition — and the neighbors still adding their names every day — are not asking for a promise that these cameras will be used carefully. They are asking you to reclaim a simple principle: free people are not a database to be searched. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss it.

Respectfully,

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