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ACLU Urges Halt of Proposed Alcohol Safety ordinance in Oxford

Today, the ACLU of Mississippi sent a letter to the Oxford Board of Aldermen in opposition to a proposed ordinance that would require certain businesses to maintain complex surveillance systems and place restrictions on event venues. The below quote can be attributed to Joshua Tom, ACLU of Mississippi Legal Director:

“The ACLU of Mississippi strongly opposes proposed ordinance Section 14-100 to 14-103 and urge the board of aldermen to vote no.

“The proposed ordinance imposes unnecessary burdens on businesses by codifying costly and historically ineffective surveillance requirements. As written, the proposed ordinance would require restaurants, bars, and entertainment venue owners to maintain sophisticated cameras at entry and exit doors of restrooms, for example, providing law enforcement officers with total access of that footage. This poses serious threats to constitutional rights, essentially amounting to government surveillance and discriminatory abuse.

“In addition, we are especially concerned about a section within the proposed ordinance that isolates and specifically targets a business that traditionally hosts events sponsored by and for Black citizens and students. This section imposes a strict notification window and associates fees for processing the notice. If facts and evidence support that this proposal is motivated by discriminatory purpose, if passed, the city of Oxford would be in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

“While we agree that public safety is important, the proposed ordinance as written is not designed to discourage underage drinking or create a safer environment for Oxford citizens and students, but would allow government surveillance of private businesses and chilling effects on First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. We, therefore, urge the Oxford Board of Aldermen to vote no.”

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