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Portland  
LD 1492

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL LECOMTE  
Ought to Pass—LD 1492

An Act to Increase the Transparency and Accountability of the Maine Information and Analysis Center

Submitted to the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

May 3rd, 2023

Good afternoon members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, I appreciate your time and consideration on the act that is being introduced to you today. My name is Michael LeComte and I am a self-described privacy advocate and public interest technologist who works in the realm of internet security.

My interest in writing to support this bill today comes from my interest in maintaining a healthy internet privacy landscape, aversion to authoritative overreach, dismay at the increased monitoring of our communications under the guise of public safety, and to offer my technical understanding of internet security.

I do not believe that the wholesale and often indiscriminate monitoring, consumption, and storage of public and private communications that is undertaken by the MIAC is healthy or productive to continuing a properly functioning democracy. The existence of the current auditing system, which is performed by the MIAC on itself, is a laughable concept. The only thing transparent about the reports that come from the self-audit are the amount of materials that they are not willing to disclose. The shallowness of the examination and pantomimed nature of the delivery would nearly pass as plausible if we weren't somewhat recently able to peek behind the curtain of their shoebox theater.

To peek behind the curtain I refer to the exposure of the BlueLeaks documents. BlueLeaks is a collection of data extracted from the MIAC and similar police intelligence centers released to the public on June 19th 2020. The Blueleaks documents contained information from many nationwide fusion centers but the MIAC is featured quite prominently in this release of information due to the depth and weight of information retained and retrieved from our state's fusion center and the insufficient nature in which it must have been stored to allow this unauthorized retrieval.

I learned many things from examining the disclosure of the Blueleaks documents. I have found that the protection and support of the needs and best interests of citizens of this state is often secondary or tertiary to the protection of business assets. The MIAC was engaged in political targeting of peaceful organizations. The MIAC was also involved in consuming and then disseminating Q conspiracy online journalism and facebook comment section drivel levels of rumor and gossip which was then regurgitated with little to no fact checking and with the weight of an authoritative state entity.

Examining the blueleaks documents enabled me to better understand the actions of law enforcement officers with their aggressive data collection policies, use of expensive privacy invading hardware, and their failing to securely transmit and store the highly personal data that results from their investigations. It is because of this unbalanced use of invasive investigative powers and the failure to properly protect digital information that I was able to find the forcefully extracted cell phone records with the private messages and final thoughts of a teenage overdose victim. No one, least of all a deceased victim and family, should be exposed to the release of their private communications due to invasive collection methods and failures in protection of collected information.

I am of the opinion that the MIAC has not proven and will continue to fail to prove that they can be trusted to maintain protection of the vast amounts of content which

they retain for questionable purposes over the course of their dubious investigations. Even if better protections were taken to secure the data that is collected we should still be appalled at the targeting of political organizations and the use of privacy violating tools which are employed. The solution is not to increase funding, the solution is abolition of the MIAC or at the very least a drastic increase to meaningful auditing and increase restrictions to the information which the MIAC can lawfully collect and disseminate. Please consider passing LD 1290, Act to End Maine Information and Analysis Center Program or at the very least LD 1492, Act to Increase the Transparency and Accountability of the Maine Information and Analysis Center.

Thank You,  
Concerned citizen of our wonderful state of Maine  
Michael LeComte