



10/14/2021

Good afternoon,

We are gathered here to celebrate the Right to Know Law being passed, signed by the mayor, and officially becoming a part of the City Charter as of September 17. The first version of the right to know law was the brainchild of MBAWNY Criminal Justice Reform Task Force co-chair John Elmore, and was drafted by co-chairs Samantha White and Miles Gresham, and was submitted to the Common Council in December of 2020. After months of hearings, discussion, and revisions, the final version of the Right to Know Law was passed by the Common Council in late July and signed by the Mayor last month. On September 17, the New York Secretary of State officially updated the City's charter, making the Right to Know Law effective as of that date.

The Buffalo Right to Know Law represents a significant victory for police transparency and accountability. It requires police to make their name tags visible when dealing with civilians, and to give motorists a written reason for a traffic stop, either in the form of a traffic ticket or a stop receipt. It also requires non-undercover police to document civilian interactions on their body cams, and to obtain affirmative, recorded consent for searches in most situations. In order to ensure compliance with these measures, the law also requires police to keep records of stops and searches, and to upload non-private information into a publicly accessible database, so that Buffalonians can have a more accurate picture of how and why they are being policed.

The Right to Know Law also represents a significant step forward for community based solutions to community issues. This law is the product of activists, attorneys, clergy, community organizers, and elected officials working together to achieve real, concrete criminal justice reform. The MBAWNY is sincerely grateful to our community partners the NAACP, the Urban Think Tank, Most Valuable Parents, the Stop the Violence Coalition, and all the community leaders who stood with us to demand the right to know how we are being policed, and by whom. We also thank Common Council President Darius Pridgen for championing the bill in the Council, as well as Councilmembers Wyatt, Wingo, Nowakowski, Bollman, Rivera, and Feroletto for voting in favor of this important piece of legislation. Finally, we thank Mayor Brown for signing the bill into law, and look to him and Police Commissioner Lockwood to implement the rules the law requires.