

February 24,2025

The Honorable chair senator William C. Smith, Jr.

Chairman, Judicial Proceedings Committee

2 East Miller Senate Office Building

11 Bladen Street

Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: OPPOSITION of Senate Bill 0709

(Criminal Law- Masked Intimidation- Prohibition (Unmasked Hate Act)-
UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith and Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

My name is Amy Muerdler, I am a Maryland resident and i am writing to urge you to vote unfavorably on House Bill 1081/Senate bill 0709

Carve-outs for medical mask use are not enough to protect disabled people from the dangerous consequences of this bill. Anti-mask laws will only increase mask stigma, increasing harassment and discrimination against mask wearers.

As a chronically ill resident of Maryland, I can speak on masking before the pandemic. I am physically allergic to the point of anaphylaxis from certain smells like cologne, perfume, and cigarettes. To limit the risks of anaphylaxis I masked everywhere I went for the past 5-6 years. Also being medically fragile, getting sick can play a big role in flares of my chronic illnesses. Not just from covid- a simple flu or cold! Criminalizing health safety equipment like masks from public use is discriminatory against the disabled/chronically ill community. Making masking feel harder for the general public makes my community more vulnerable. Not masking puts everyone at risk for re-entering lock down territory of the pandemic. Covid disproportionately affects people of color, the best thing you can do for Covid is prevent it, by masking. making masking a target for increased police surveillance, risks the health and safety of many vulnerable populations.

For these reasons and more I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give SB0709 an unfavorable report.