

*Rosa Greenberg
Silver Spring, MD 20902
MD Legislative District 18*

I am writing to submit testimony in strong opposition to SB0709 (“Criminal Law - Masked Intimidation - Prohibition (Unmask Hate Act)). I am a constituent of bill co-sponsor Senator Waldstreicher.

Stigmatizing masks does not prevent violence and harassment. Rather, it fuels them. This violence and harassment will disproportionately harm disabled people, people of color, and disabled people of color. This bill will not make Maryland safer. Instead, it will make it less safe.

Masks are an essential protective medical tool. As a disabled person, I depend on my N95 for my safety whenever I enter an indoor public space. I also depend on my community members’ use of masks to lower spread of airborne disease. My mask protects others; others’ masks protect me. Any state law that makes it harder to mask creates direct threats to safety, health, and wellbeing.

This bill will increase law enforcement’s racial profiling. Disabled people of color, who already face higher risk of death from COVID and morbidity from Long COVID, will face even greater danger when in public spaces. They should never have to weigh whether wearing a mask to protect their health is worth a corresponding risk to their safety.

I am Jewish and I am deeply concerned about antisemitism. I think that addressing antisemitism is essential; I think that this bill does not do that. In contrast, I think that it uses Jewish safety as a justification for harmful policies, which is something that – ironically –ultimately also makes Jewish people less safe. It is far harder to do community education about antisemitism when repressive policies like this are how people experience anti-antisemitism measures in their daily lives. Jewish safety is interwoven with safety of other marginalized groups, not something that should come at the expense of other marginalized groups.