

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 07091

(Criminal Law - Masked Intimidation - Prohibition (Unmask Hate Act)) - **UNFAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Smith and Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

My name is Vanessa Strickland and I am a Maryland resident. I'm writing today 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.

The definition of "intimidation" in the bill here is broad, and can easily be used to discriminate against Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) as well as other marginalized groups to cause them harm. This bill infringes on the right for people to remain healthy and keep those around them safe from illness. What is the purpose of a bill to specifically fine/jail those who are masked and perceived to be "intimidating?" I am far more intimidated by an individual wearing or carrying white nationalist clothing/regalia (masked or not)... yet there is no bill for that.

For these reasons and more, I ask that the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee give SB0706 an unfavorable report.

Many thanks for your time and attention,

Vanessa Strickland