

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 James Schaefer and I am a resident of Baltimore, MD. I 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.

Criminalizing masking is bad policy for public health. My wife has a doctorate in public health, and her and many of her colleagues are presently very concerned about any legislation that may stigmatize medical mask use. This is due to high current hospitalizations from flu and covid, and in particular in light of the current worrying trend in avian flu cases across the country.

Beyond public health impacts, this bill will also escalate biased law enforcement, which already disproportionately harms Marylanders who are Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC). And this legislation will create a chilling effect on anyone who simply wants to protect themselves from airborne illness as they go about their lives.

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