

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 (Unmask Hate Act))

- UNFAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith and Judicial Proceedings Committee Members,

My name is Andrew Edwards, I am a MD 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.

Health exemptions for mask bans are impractical and unfair to enforce. The logistical challenges of verifying exemptions would result in inconsistent application and abuse, creating a civil rights and public health crisis.

It 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.