

Hello my name is Scott Richey-Stavrand and I am asking the Judicial Proceedings Committee to give SB 0709 an unfavorable report.

I am testifying AGAINST SB0709.

I am a resident of St Mary's County. My wife is immunocompromised and we both wear masks when out in public. I am vigorously opposed to any criminalization of masking. Claims that masking alone can be intimidating are wrong and drive negative sentiments towards individuals who continue to mask to protect the health and safety of themselves and their loved ones.

This bill does not make sense. If I am wearing a mask while walking on the street and don't move out of someone's way could that be deemed as intimidating? If I am peacefully protesting while wearing a mask does that make my protest intimidation and I am subject to criminal charges? On the other hand, if my intention is to intimidate someone but I am not wearing a mask is no crime committed? If intimidation itself is already a crime then this bill is redundant and the police should simply enforce the laws as they stand.

At best this bill is misguided and shows an ignorance of the current health crisis facing our state and at worst is a new tool for the government to suppress constitutionally protected activities. While the underlying goals of this bill are to target neo-nazis and white supremacists there are no reasons this cannot be extended to anyone who wears a mask in any context (bank, hospital, park, school, etc.). I find no comfort in the reply that I am safe wearing my mask as long as I don't bother anyone when the passage of this bill may increase the chances that people will now bother me just for wearing a mask. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony and please give this bill an unfavorable report.

Scott Richey-Stavrand