

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,

I am a Maryland 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.

My partner and I have faced harassment for wearing masks to protect ourselves from COVID-19 several times in Montgomery County. One of the scariest interactions took place in a grocery store parking lot this summer. As I approached my vehicle with my partner, a driver rolled down their window, increased their speed in our direction and shouted “take your f*cking masks off.” This incident took place as the North Carolina legislature discussed legislation that would ban masks in their state. Could our harasser have been emboldened by coverage of that legislation? I cannot be certain.

But I am certain my household is not alone in the harassment we have faced. After [North Carolina’s](#) legislation was introduced in May 2024, a Stage 4 breast cancer patient in NC was [intentionally spat on by someone who said he “hoped the cancer would kill her.”](#) During the Nassau County, New York mask ban hearing, [disabled and immunocompromised attendees were subject to severe harassment](#), including derogatory remarks, stalking, and heckling. Some immunocompromised individuals were intentionally coughed on.

Anti-mask legislation, which is precisely what HB1081/SB 0709 is, endangers marginalized people. It puts us at risk for harassment in our communities and profiling from police.

As a member of the LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities, I will not be made safer by the “Unmask Hate Bill.” It will make me a target for more hate. It will make it harder for me to safely exist in public space.

If I reacted to the man who dangerously drove towards me and the person I love most in a way that may be conceived as intimidating, could I have been arrested under this legislation had it been in place? Studies have shown BIPOC New Yorkers [face higher threats](#) from police and the public when wearing masks.

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