

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,

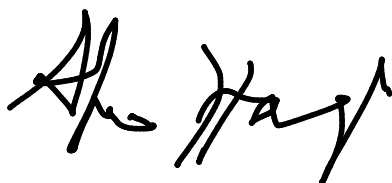
My name is Alex Haraseyko and I am a MD resident. I am writing to urge you to vote **unfavorably** on House Bill 1081/Senate Bill 0709. Carve-outs for medical mask use are not enough to protect disabled people from the dangerous consequences of this bill. Anti-mask laws will only increase mask stigma, increasing harassment and discrimination against mask-wearers.

Criminalizing masking is bad policy for public health. This is especially true right now, as the Maryland Department of Health recommends masking due to high hospitalization rates for COVID, influenza, and RSV. Even people without high-risk conditions can be and are affected by these illnesses.

Furthermore, 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.

Finally, this bill could result in real harm to various marginalized communities (such as disabled members of marginalized communities, as well as young black boys) in its real world application. The penalties of this bill, fines and potential incarceration, can exacerbate immense harm to members of these communities.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alex Haraseyko". The signature is stylized with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline.