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Testimony of Jaime Contreras, 32BJ SEIU Executive Vice President
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
Senate Bill No. 1 - Favorable
January 22, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee,

32BJ SEIU offers favorable testimony in support of **SB 1 - Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers - Prohibition on Face Coverings**.

32BJ is the largest building service union in the country, representing over 185,000 members up and down the East Coast and over 3,700 members across Maryland. Our members are primarily immigrants and people of color, and make up the workforce of essential cleaners, door-people, airport workers, and other building service workers who keep our homes, workplaces, schools, and transportation hubs up and running.

With our dedicated members, we fight to build a just society where immigrants can live free of fear and are treated with dignity and respect. That is why we at 32BJ SEIU are deeply concerned with the presence of unidentified masked individuals who claim to be federal officers in our communities.

SB 1 would ban the use of face coverings by any law enforcement officers or agents in Maryland, including federal, state, county or local law enforcement. The proposition that law enforcement officers should operate with reasonable transparency and accountability is a basic tenet of the rule of law. Every individual being detained should have the right to know who is detaining them, and under what authority.

Over the past year, increasingly reckless federal immigration policy has sown fear and distrust across our union's membership and damaged the broader social fabric that holds our state together. This fear is totally understandable, because not only have ICE agents wrongfully detained numerous U.S. citizensⁱ and lawfully present noncitizens,ⁱⁱ there have also been multiple reports of criminals posing as ICE agents committing robberies, kidnappings, and sexual assaults across several states including Maryland.ⁱⁱⁱ These incidents of officer impersonation are unsurprising given the frequency with which federal agents now don masks to conceal their identities during operations.^{iv}

Due to the chaos created by this administration's approach to immigration enforcement, workers across Maryland are increasingly hesitant to show up for their jobs, employers are seeing disruption and uncertainty in their workplaces,

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and violations of labor and wage laws are going unaddressed because workers fear that speaking up could put themselves or their families at risk.

This climate of fear undermines basic workplace accountability. Retaliation—or the fear of it—is the primary reason workers do not report abuse. When immigration enforcement activity escalates, especially where it intersects with state or local law enforcement, unethical employers are effectively given cover to exploit vulnerable workers.^v That exploitation does not stop with immigrant workers; it threatens safety and standards across entire sectors. Clear protections that separate immigration enforcement from workers' interactions with government are essential to ensuring that all workers can assert their rights without fear

For these reasons, 32BJ SEIU urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a **favorable report on SB 1**.

ⁱ Nicole Foy, *We Found That More Than 170 U.S. Citizens Have Been Held by Immigration Agents. They've Been Kicked, Dragged and Detained for Days*, ProPublica, October 16, 2025, <https://www.propublica.org/article/immigration-dhs-american-citizens-arrested-detained-against-will>

ⁱⁱ Heidi Altman, *ICE is detaining indiscriminately. And releasing almost no one*, National Immigration Law Center, October 21, 2025. <https://www.nilc.org/articles/ice-is-detaining-indiscriminately-and-releasing-almost-no-one/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Dell Cameron & Caroline Haskins, *FBI Warns of Criminals Posing as ICE, Urges Agents to ID Themselves*, Wired, November 4, 2025, <https://www.wired.com/story/fbi-warns-of-criminals-posing-as-ice-urges-agents-to-id-themselves/>; Troy Pope & Rafael Sanchez-Cruz, *Police: Man posing as ICE agent sexually assaults woman under threat of deportation in Prince George's County*, WUSA9, June 16, 2023, <https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/crime/fake-ice-agent-sexually-assaults-woman/65-4889aaf6-3b80-45e5-b073-53e36608a98a>; Nuala Mernin, *ICE Raids Are Breeding Dangerous Imitators and Social Division*, Harvard Political Review, December 28, 2025, <https://theharvardpoliticalreview.com/ice-raids-imitators/>.

^{iv} Allie Preston, *Masked and Unidentifiable: The Risks of Federal Law Enforcement Operating Without Identification*, Center for American Progress, August 28, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/masked-and-unidentifiable-the-risks-of-federal-law-enforcement-operating-without-identification/>

^v Daniel Costa, *Immigration enforcement and the workplace*, Economic Policy Institute. April 15, 2025, <https://www.epi.org/publication/immigration-enforcement-and-the-workplace/>

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