

TO: Chair William C. Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

My name is Lorette Vetusi and I am resident of Harford County, Maryland. I am writing in support of SB0001/HB0155, Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Prohibition on Face Covering.

I want to voice my serious concerns about ICE agents being masked while on the job. I am becoming increasingly alarmed at seeing horrific images and videos of people being forcefully grabbed and whisked off to unknown locations without due process by armed and masked agents. Families are being cruelly separated, and children are feeling justifiably terrified and traumatized. It is hard to believe that these atrocities are happening here in our country and in our state!

Normalizing mask-wearing by ICE agents is clearly endangering our public safety and security. And just as terrifying as having innocent people being kidnapped by ICE agents is the fact that criminals could easily impersonate agents for nefarious purposes! Furthermore, masking only enhances feelings of impunity among some of the agents, which leads to increasingly brazen acts of aggression and violence. And all the while, Federal government officials are putting forth false narratives about what is happening, while justifying the ICE agents' violent behaviors and blaming the victims.

Establishing a state law which requires ICE agents to be unmasked will help reduce fear among Maryland residents. It will also help us hold agents accountable for any illegal and unconstitutional actions that they take when trying to meet their outlandish quotas for arresting people. During this extremely dangerous period in our country's history, I at least feel fortunate to live in a blue state where our state government officials are hard at work trying to protect us from abuses of the federal government led by a dictator wannabe.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB0001/HB0155. Thank you for all of your current and future efforts to keep Marylanders safe!