

Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Prohibition on Face Covering

January 22, 2026

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

My name is Tiffany Wandy, and I am a resident of Churchville, Maryland. I am writing in support of SB0001/HB0155, Public Safety – Law Enforcement – Prohibition on Face Covering.

I care deeply about this issue because trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve is foundational to public safety. Federal agents operate in our neighborhoods, interact with our neighbors, coworkers, and family members, and wield extraordinary authority. With that authority comes a responsibility to be identifiable, accountable, and subject to the same standards of transparency expected of all public servants. When that trust erodes, it does not just harm individuals directly affected by enforcement actions — it weakens the sense of safety and stability for entire communities.

Before 2015, immigration agents rarely wore masks except when undercover or during certain targeted actions. Normalizing masks has endangered public safety. Multiple states have arrested people impersonating ICE agents for devious purposes. In some cases, masked, plainclothes agents have been mistaken for criminals, creating fear, chaos, and confusion. Most importantly, masking has contributed to a feeling of impunity among certain agents, leading to increased aggression and violence on the part of those agents.

In our communities, the presence of masked federal agents has made people more fearful of engaging with any authority — even in emergencies. Individuals are less likely to seek help, report crimes, or cooperate as witnesses when they cannot distinguish legitimate law enforcement from bad actors. This atmosphere of uncertainty does not make Maryland safer; it makes everyone more vulnerable. Accountability begins with identification, and visible identification is essential for lawful oversight and public confidence.

Seeing images of residents and workers being grabbed by masked, armed men and taken away to unknown locations evokes the appearance of secret police — something that feels profoundly out of place in Maryland and in the United States. Prohibiting the use of face coverings by ICE and CBP agents, except in narrowly defined circumstances, would meaningfully reduce fear, deter impersonation, and help restore trust that federal agents are acting within the bounds of the law and can be held accountable when they do not.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB0001/HB0155.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the people of Maryland.