

Testimony on Senate Bill – Favorable

SB0001 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 22, 2026

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

My name is Carla Vincent, and I am a resident of Gaithersburg, Maryland, in District 17. I am writing in support of SB0001.

In a constitutional democracy, the exercise of state power must be **visible, identifiable, and accountable**. When armed law enforcement officers conceal their faces during routine enforcement actions, that principle is undermined. Members of the public cannot readily identify who is acting under lawful authority, nor can they meaningfully seek accountability if an encounter goes wrong. Over time, this erodes due process, civilian oversight, and public confidence in the rule of law.

SB0001 addresses a basic but critical public safety concern. Civil law enforcement—particularly immigration enforcement—is not combat policing. Face coverings create the appearance of paramilitary or extrajudicial action and introduce fear far out of proportion to the legal authority being exercised. That fear does not remain confined to undocumented individuals; it spreads to mixed-status families, lawful residents, and U.S. citizens, reducing cooperation with law enforcement and weakening community safety overall. From a governance perspective, this is counterproductive enforcement.

Clear identification standards are also necessary to prevent **dangerous confusion and escalation**. When armed individuals act while masked or without clearly visible identification, bystanders have no reliable way to know whether they are witnessing a lawful arrest or a crime in progress. This increases the risk of intervention, resistance, or violence—placing both the public and officers at greater risk. Visible identification protects everyone involved.

Maryland has long benefited from a law enforcement culture that emphasizes transparency and accountability. Our communities are safer when people trust that officers are acting openly, lawfully, and under clear authority. Allowing routine face coverings for law enforcement officers undermines that trust and creates unnecessary risk.

SB0001 does not prevent law enforcement from doing its job. It simply reinforces long-standing American norms: that officers exercising state power do so **openly and identifiably**, except in narrowly defined and truly exigent circumstances.

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

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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