

To: Maryland General Assembly
From: Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie, Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality
Re: Senate Bill 1

January 20, 2026

Dear Senators:

As Director of Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality, I write in urgent and personal support of Senate Bill 1, which would require law enforcement officers—including state, local, and in practice prohibiting face coverings while performing duty—to serve with their faces and identities clearly visible, except in narrowly defined undercover operations.

This bill responds directly to how opaque and unaccountable enforcement actions by immigration agents have created danger and fear in communities across the United States. In the fatal shooting of Renée Nicole Good by an ICE agent in Minneapolis, video footage captured the agent firing at her vehicle; subsequent reporting noted that federal agents present often operated without visible identification. Without clear visibility of who is performing enforcement actions — including the agent's name, badge, or agency — residents are unable to protect their rights or understand whom they are interacting with.

Senate Bill 1 would:

- Require law enforcement agencies in Maryland to adopt policies prohibiting officers from wearing face coverings that obscure their identity while on duty;
- Ensure that the public, courts, and victims know who is enforcing the laws, preventing anonymous enforcement that parallels many of the troubling ICE operations seen recently;
- Provide greater accountability if enforcement actions — including arrests, detentions, or use of force — result in harm, wrongful detention, or escalation.

Recent federal immigration enforcement tactics nationwide — including fatal shootings, sudden detentions, and what many describe as home invasions — illustrate the danger of agents acting without accountability mechanisms. When agents are masked or unidentified, neighbors cannot verify the legitimacy of an operation, and families are left vulnerable to serious harm.

Proponents of transparency laws have noted that requiring visible identification diminishes the likelihood of misconduct and increases trust in public safety institutions. Allowing agents to hide their identity shields them from accountability and increases the risk of illegal detentions,

wrongful confrontations, or escalating encounters. Prohibiting face coverings in enforcement actions is a meaningful, concrete public safety measure that ensures all residents — including immigrants, refugees, and communities of color — are treated with dignity, respect, and the assurance that those enforcing laws can be held accountable.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 1.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'O' followed by a series of loops and a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Ongisa Ichile-Mckenzie
Director, Southern Marylanders for Racial Equality