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:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony IN FAVOR of SB1, which will restrict face mask use by law enforcement in Maryland.

My name is Lia Nigro. I am a resident of Columbia, MD, and a volunteer with Indivisible Howard County. In that capacity, this past July I conducted research related to anti-masking legislation efforts and related concerns. This research strengthened my instinctive belief that it is vital to see the faces of those enforcing the law (and terrifying not to). Here is some background on why restricting masking to cases in which it is necessary for health or safety is important for law enforcement and the public:

- Masking is psychologically associated with criminals. Use of masks could endanger law enforcement officers if an armed citizen, reacting quickly in a stressful situation, takes officers for criminals. This is a more immediate and likely risk than doxing, which is a non-immediate threat with protection offered by numerous federal and state laws against harassment and cyberstalking.
- Anonymity has been shown to reduce a person's sense of accountability, and to increase the chance of rogue behavior. Maryland has strong and admirable requirements for officers to identify themselves immediately but showing one's face is a basic element contributing to interacting in a civilized way with other human beings.
- Being able to see that officers of the law are in fact fellow human beings decreases fear and confusion among citizens and increases trust in law enforcement.
- If law enforcement does not use masks, that decreases opportunity for imposture by criminals and vigilantes (a threat on the rise around the country), and allows those victimized by such imposters to identify their victimizers.

Please vote IN FAVOR of SB 1. Thank you for your consideration.

Additional Background:

No One Can Tell Who's a Cop Anymore. New York Magazine, 2025
https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/trump-immigration-ice-agents-masks-criminal-imposters.html

Masked Federal Agents Undermine the Rule of Law. Human Rights Watch, 2025
https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/12/18/us-masked-federal-agents-undermine-rule-of-law

Who Is That? The Study of Anonymity and Behavior. Association for Psychological Science, 2018
https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/who-is-that-the-study-of-anonymity-and-behavior