



Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 22, 2026

**Senate Bill 1: Judicial Proceedings – Law Enforcement Officers –
Prohibition on Face Coverings**

POSITION: SUPPORT

The National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD), representing licensed social workers across the State of Maryland, respectfully submits this testimony in support of Senate Bill 1, legislation that would prohibit law enforcement officers from wearing face coverings while performing official duties.

NASW-MD's support for this bill is firmly grounded in the NASW Code of Ethics, which establishes the ethical responsibilities of social workers to promote human dignity, social justice, integrity, and the importance of human relationships. These values are essential to the creation of public systems that are transparent, accountable, and responsive to community needs.

The NASW Code of Ethics affirms the dignity and worth of the person and emphasizes that all individuals have the right to be treated with respect and fairness. The presence of law enforcement officers wearing face coverings while exercising state authority undermines this principle by creating fear, anxiety, and intimidation among community members. Such practices are especially harmful to vulnerable and marginalized populations, including children, older adults, individuals with disabilities, immigrants, and communities that have historically experienced disproportionate policing.

The Code of Ethics further underscores the importance of human relationships, recognizing trust as a cornerstone of effective social systems and community safety. Visible identification of law enforcement officers is a critical component of establishing trust, facilitating communication, and promoting accountability. Face coverings erode these relationships by obscuring identity, limiting nonverbal communication, and reducing perceived responsibility for conduct.

NASW-MD is also guided by the ethical principle of social justice, which compels social workers to challenge policies and practices that contribute to oppression, fear, or harm. Anonymous policing tactics have been shown to escalate tensions, discourage community cooperation, and weaken public confidence in law enforcement institutions. These outcomes are inconsistent with ethical governance and trauma-informed community engagement.

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Senate Bill 1 appropriately directs the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to develop a model policy prohibiting face coverings during the course of duty. This approach promotes statewide consistency while reinforcing ethical standards of transparency and accountability, without impeding legitimate public safety functions already addressed through existing policies and exceptions.

NASW-MD believes this legislation represents an important step toward strengthening trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve, in alignment with ethical principles that prioritize human dignity, relationship-building, and community well-being.

For these reasons, the National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 1 and advance it to the full Senate for consideration.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Philip A. Pratt, BSW, MSW, ACSW
NASW-MD Chapter President

Karessa Proctor, BSW, MSW
Executive Director: Maryland, Metro DC, Delaware Chapters
National Association of Social Workers