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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB0001, Public Safety - Law Enforcement Officers -
Prohibition on Face Coverings
1-20-26

TO: Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Jess Hencke

Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee, my name is Jess Hencke, I live in Columbia, Maryland, and I am writing to support SB0001, Prohibition on Face Coverings for Law Enforcement Officers, and to change the effective date of this law to July—or sooner, if possible.

In our state, we strive to hold citizens accountable for crimes committed—and no one should be immune from this accountability. Face coverings for Law Enforcement Officers actively impede this goal and harm the transparency of investigative procedures against unsuitable officers. Public trust will erode when the people meant to protect our communities make their appearances as masked individuals with guns drawn.

Transparency is critical for the safety and security of our communities, and Law Enforcement Officers need not be exempt. Interactions with officers sometimes occur with heightened emotion. To have officers seemingly immune from consequence via the anonymity of face coverings could increase fear in the public space and runs counter to helping officers to de-escalate and resolve an encounter.

Let us progress towards a safer Maryland and be an example for our country by embodying the concept of Justice for All. Prohibiting masked law enforcement is one small step towards ensuring the people wearing badges are discharging their duties faithfully. I urge you to support SB 0001 and help ensure that Maryland's law enforcement is being held to the highest standards of conduct. Thank you for your time.