

January 22, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Maryland Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Byron Merrick and I am a resident and voter living in Baltimore, Maryland.

I am writing in support of SB0001 – Public Safety – Law Enforcement Officers – Prohibition on Face Coverings

I support SB0001 because it is very important, for public safety and public trust, that ICE officers be able to be identified! Without identification and uniform standards that are visible, the public will continue to lack trust in those who are tasked to enforce immigration laws.

As a country, we have long witnessed other countries who have “disappeared” people using police or military that are masked and unidentified - whisking people away in unmarked vehicles. We have long been outraged by those ghastly tactics. Several South American countries, notably Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and others, experienced widespread forced disappearances by their military regimes, targeting political dissidents, activists, and perceived enemies during the 1970s and 1980s, with thousands becoming 'desaparecidos' (the disappeared). As a country, we were rightfully repulsed by those tactics and protested them!

Today's efforts by ICE are scarily reminiscent of those reprehensible actions – uniformly condemned here in the US – but now, sadly, in place by ICE. So now, we too, must proclaim our opposition to law enforcement officials being masked and not wearing identifiable uniforms.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on SB0001. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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